

MAY 21, 2007

# The American Conservative

## Globalization Bites

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Trust What  
You Eat?**

**AL-QAEDA'S WAITING GAME**  
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**ONE NATION, DIVISIBLE**  
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## PRINCIPLED STREET-FIGHTER

W. James Antle III has it wrong ("The War Party," April 23). Those of us who share the entire spectrum of conservative domestic policies don't give them up just because of our emphasis on the urgency of winning this war. We think that if there is a Republican candidate out there who is really serious about winning the war on terror—as is Rudy Giuliani—then we must put all other issues temporarily aside, if necessary.

You correctly identify Giuliani as "ruthless," and that is exactly what we need both to win this war abroad and to defeat its lily-livered critics at home. President Bush has muddled aspects of the occupation and has not thoroughly put this country on a war footing. Giuliani will fix that. He is a great communicator and teacher, which is partly why is he is a great leader. And he will win.

Don't forget that Franklin D. Roosevelt did not abandon his New Deal policies just because there was a war to be won. Had he lived after victory—and been re-elected to a fifth term in 1948—is there any doubt that he would have returned to his domestic agenda promptly, the nascent Cold War notwithstanding?

Giuliani is hardly a liberal. As mayor of New York City, he enraged liberal partisans up and down the line. He will forge ahead with the thick skin so necessary to win this war and defeat its critics, and at the same time, he will appoint judges who will advance a conservative domestic agenda.

President Bush's father didn't lose conservative support simply because he forfeited his "no new taxes" pledge. He lost that support, which he really never had to begin with, because he never supported that point of view. He was your typical "country club" Republican. Rudy

Giuliani is hardly that. He is a principled, tough street fighter—just what this country needs before it becomes totally feminized and defeated on all issues, domestic as well as foreign.

This is no "fool's bargain," and that is a very condescending way to characterize the views of those of us who want very much to win this war, advance our policies, and turn the court around. But we know that we won't have much to discuss if we are forced to wear burkhas, eat hummus, and live by *sharia*. And neither will Mr. Antle.

J.H. COHEN  
*New York, N.Y.*

### W. James Antle III replies:

I might find your commitment to keeping me free of *sharia*, burkhas, and hummus more persuasive if it entailed something other than overthrowing one of the most secular governments in the Middle East, creating a power vacuum that has been filled by Shi'ite and Sunni radicals, aiding al-Qaeda's recruitment, and leaving us less capable of credibly deterring Iran.

And despite my admiration for Rudy Giuliani's performance as mayor, I'm afraid that your decision to reduce the domestic conservative agenda to tough talk, machismo, and an ability to irritate Manhattan's hard Left shows a similar lack of discernment.

### HAGEL'S PHILOSOPHY

"Can a war skeptic lead the GOP?" your April 9 headline asks. Not if he's Chuck Hagel. Even if Senator Hagel seems prescient on the Iraq War, his voting record on another issue disqualifies him in the minds of many conservatives.

Hagel and Sen. Mel Martinez of Florida crafted the compromise in the infamous McCain-Kennedy amnesty/doubling of legal immigration bill that

passed the Senate last May in a 62-36 vote.

According to Americans for Better Immigration's report card, Chuck Hagel has a "D" immigration voting record. The Senate average is "C." Fellow Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, a Democrat, has a "B." TOM SHUFORD  
*Lenoir, N.C.*

## SAVAGE WARS OF DEMOCRACY

What a fine article Scott McConnell wrote on the Algerian war—incisive, accurate, and salutary (April 23). I spent five years in Morocco as a teacher (1957-62) and came back to France just in time to enjoy the daily contact with armed soldiers every time I went to my bus stop in Cours de Vincennes. As a Brit, I was welcome in Morocco and could go anywhere without danger. Thanks to our politicians on both sides of the Atlantic, I doubt I could do that now.

I have long felt that De Gaulle's initiative was the only possible one. Why do we always insist that our kind of democracy is the only alternative when the evidence is clear that this is not so? I remember hearing a speech in which your first lady got very exercised about the terrible way women were treated in Afghanistan under the Taliban, yet today nothing seems to have changed outside Kabul. And does the treating of women as equals mean that pre-war Iraq had some virtues?

GEOFFREY VITALE  
*Via e-mail*

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[IRAQ]

## WE WON, LET'S LEAVE

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid upset the capital with his assessment that the Iraq War is "lost." In politics as in life, blunt candor isn't always the best instrument, and Reid's remark sent the keyboard warriors into a frenzy. He might have been wiser to mimic Vermont Republican George Aiken, who took to the Senate floor in 1966 and said of Vietnam that we should declare victory and leave.

That declaration could be made without huge difficulty. Saddam is gone, so there is no prospect of him passing the WMD he never had to Osama bin Laden. The major rationales under which the war was sold to the American people have been satisfied. Even more, Baghdad has a democratically elected government of sorts. And it's plain to all not snuggled in the White House bunker that Iraq is not "the central front" in the war on terror but a boon to terrorists.

The last thread of presidential logic—that terrorists will "follow us home" if we don't rout them in Iraq—was soundly discredited by former terrorism czar Richard Clarke in a recent *New York Daily News* op-ed: "How is this odd terrorist puppy dog behavior supposed to work? The President must believe that terrorists are playing by some odd rule of chivalry. Would this be the 'only one slaughter ground at a time' rule of terrorism? Of course nothing about our being 'over there' in any way prevents terrorists from coming here." Just the opposite: if you are an America-hater hoping to recruit terrorists, having two-thirds of the U.S. Army bogged down is as good as it gets.

The war has become an occupation of someone else's country, against the wishes of the majority of that country, the majority of those in the surrounding countries, and the majority in the United States. We need to leave—not



precipitously or dangerously, but leave nonetheless. We hurt ourselves by staying.

[ELECTION]

## NEXT NEOCONSERVATISM?

With his recent address to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Barack Obama put to rest the charge that he is running only on feel-good platitudes, smooth delivery, and a comparatively youthful face. He sketched out a foreign-policy program to complement his early opposition to the Iraq War. Unfortunately, the ideas were a bit unhinged or at least radically misguided.

Obama made a list of problem areas in the world, including Ukraine, Sudan, and Kenya, declaring that "the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people." There are many things to be said about this, but perhaps the most important is that it simply isn't true. The United States has no significant strategic stake in the struggle over India's borders, Darfur, or even democracy in South America. To pretend that we have a vital interest in every area of the world is to render impossible any sense of strategy or priority of concerns. Moreover, it is a recipe for continuing to assert American global hegemony—a scheme that is working so well for the Bush adminis-

tration. Perhaps Obama's kinder, gentler version of the U.S. as world policeman cum social worker is an improvement, less likely to involve starting wars for no real reason. But we shouldn't count on it.

Not surprisingly, this speech by the Left's new darling won raves from prominent neoconservatives, who remain enthusiastic about the idea that America should be involved in every world matter and are petrified that the American people are growing tired of bearing that burden. The *New York Times's* David Brooks praised Obama for, if you please, trying to "thread the Niebuhrian needle," and Robert Kagan waxed ecstatic in the *Washington Post*. Obama thinks "Everything and everywhere is of strategic concern to the United States," Kagan enthused.

When major propagandists for the Iraq War go all gooey over a left-wing Democrat's foreign-policy ideas, it ought to be a buyer beware sign for other Americans.

[CULTURE]

## BOW YOUR HEAD & HOPE

The apologetics of it are simple: when packaging human concerns as prayer, include a divine address. Leave God out and it's just Hallmark well-wishing, as likely to be answered as last year's note to Santa Claus.

John Edwards seems to recognize this. After a consultant suggested that religious talk might reel back Reagan Democrats, the presidential hopeful offered a prayer for the families of the Virginia Tech victims "in Christ's name."

We don't know how God answered, but we know how the multicultural Left did. Writing in the *Politico*, pundit Roger Simon asked, "Does John Edwards include Jews in his prayers? Or Muslims? Or Hindus? Or any other non-Christians?"

Of course he does. But why would a believer scattershot the heavens in hopes of reaching whatever random deity happens to be on call? And why pray if one is unpersuaded of the superiority of any divine authority? Not even the most pious leftist recites an ecumenical salutation when he kneels in private, so why should his public prayer aim to appease a pantheon?

Those who make political correctness their creed might feign delight if Edwards addressed prayers to Bhuvaneshwari, but any Hindus in the crowd would likely see the pandering for what it is. And it's not as if critics like Simon really want candidates to finger rosary beads while observing Passover *en route* to Mecca. When he writes that "People who are not Christians often feel left out of prayers like his," Simon expresses the kind of discomfort that won't be alleviated until religion is entirely banished from the public square.

[MILITARY]

## STRESS FRACTURE

A recent American Armed Forces Press Service headline defies parody: "Extended Deployments Should Lessen Army Stress, Commander Says." What's the best way to reduce stress on the Army? Put more stress on the soldiers. Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently announced that all active-duty

soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq will have their deployments extended from 12 to 15 months.

According to Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, "the tour extensions will provide more predictability and stability for soldiers and their families." Right—if children learn to appreciate the predictability of a parent's absence and spouses accept that homecomings are disruptive.

Army Col. Martin Schweitzer says that the Pentagon "put a lot of rigor and analysis into this to determine what is best for the service and what is sustainable." Perhaps it should consider whether it's best to lose an army in order to save a misconceived policy. The former secretary of defense said, "You go to war with the Army you have." To that we add: you can come home with the Army you have, too.

[BELTWAY]

## WOLFOWITZ'S TAB

After it came to light that he had arranged a cushy job for his girlfriend, World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz hired a lawyer to help him keep his job. Bob Bennett's first public intervention was to compare Wolfowitz's plight to that of the falsely accused Duke lacrosse players.

Somehow the comparison seems to lack an essential aptness. Let's just try it out in numerical terms. People directly or indirectly harmed by the actions of the Duke lacrosse team: 0. People directly or indirectly harmed by the actions of Paul Wolfowitz, one of the primary architects of the Iraq War? Well, it depends on whether one counts only Americans or Americans and Iraqis and just people killed or killed and wounded. We acknowledge that Wolfowitz will likely escape trial for war crimes, but there's still a good deal of counting to be done. ■

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# The Bill for Bush's War

Four years have elapsed since the triumphal "Mission Accomplished" address abroad the *Lincoln* and nearly five years since the inception of this magazine.

A time for reflection.

A founding purpose of *TAC* was to speak out with a conservative voice against the unnecessary war being prepared by a White House and its neoconservative allies hellbent on bringing democracy to the Middle East in the bellies of Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

In my first column, "American Empire at Apogee," September 2002, one month before a Democratic Senate gave Bush a blank check and six months before Bush launched the war, I wrote, "If Providence does not intrude, we will soon launch an imperial war on Iraq with all the 'On-to-Berlin!' bravado with which French poilus and British Tommies marched in August 1914. ... But what comes after the celebratory gunfire when wicked Saddam is dead?"

"With our MacArthur Regency in Baghdad, Pax Americana will reach apogee. But then the tide recedes, for the one endeavor at which Islamic peoples excel is expelling imperial powers by terror and guerrilla war. They drove the Brits out of Palestine and Aden, the French out of Algeria, the Russians out of Afghanistan, the Americans out of Somalia and Beirut, the Israelis out of Lebanon. ...

"We have started up the road to empire and over the next hill we shall meet those who went before. The only lesson we learn from history is that we do not learn from history."

And so it has come to pass.

In article after article, issue after issue, conservatives, libertarians, and

anti-interventionists appeared here, warning the nation against the war into which we were being stampeded.

So effective were we that *National Review*, once the *Iskra* of our cause, ran a cover story titled "Unpatriotic Conservatives," accusing seven writers for this magazine and all three of its founding editors of hating America and hoping for her defeat. Let the reader judge who put America first.

The butcher's bill is in. While the Army and Marine Corps have fought these four years with the selfless sacrifice and bravery Americans have come to expect, 3,300 of them are never coming home. Many thousands more are wounded and maimed for life.

Scores of thousands of Iraqis are dead. Upward of four million have been driven from their homes, two million into exile in Jordan, Syria, and other counties. The Christian community of Iraq is history.

Politically, Iraq is free of Saddam and his tyrannical state. The Kurds are free, but they were already free. The Shia have been liberated. Their own are in power and will likely rule. The Sunni have been dispossessed.

What the United States got out of Bush's War is hard to see. America is detested in the Islamic world. Our alliances have been strained, our friends alienated. Our prestige is at the lowest level in the history of the Republic. The Pax Americana is over.

The Army is on the verge of breaking. The military bears the stains of Haditha and Abu Ghraib. While our

forces have not lost a battle, as they did not lose a battle in Vietnam, the United States, as Colin Powell said, is again "losing the war."

With both houses of Congress having voted an October deadline to begin pulling out troops and an April deadline for leaving Iraq, we are at the beginning of the end of America's involvement.

But America's withdrawal is not the end of this war. It may be but the beginning of a larger war for the future of Iraq and the Middle East. And that war will likely begin with the friends we leave behind in Iraq suffering the fate of the Vietnamese and Cambodians we left behind.

Optimists believe that once we are gone, the tribal chiefs and Ba'athists will make short work of the al-Qaeda assassins who will be of no further use. Perhaps. My sense is that al-Qaeda will depart for Amman, Riyadh, and the Gulf states to seek out Americans and the friends of Americans. Humanists who bemoan the Saudi royal family may wind up like Western liberals who bemoaned the kaiser and czar—until they got a look at the options.

No one knows the future. But the likelihood is that the Shia, after some bloodletting of their own, will dominate Iraq, from Baghdad to Basra, and drift into Iran's orbit. Anbar will become the Waziristan of the Arab world. The Kurds will solidify their independence and rely on America to save them from the Iranians and Turks.

And the neocons will tell us that as long as Assad and Ahmadinejad are in power and Hamas and Hezbollah have not been eradicated, we remain in mortal danger. And this is where we came in. ■

[gluttons for punishment]

# Globalization Bites

Depending on foreign sources may mean smaller grocery bills, but how secure is a country that can't control its food supply? Ask your pet.

By William Norman Grigg

LEGEND HAS IT that Teddy Roosevelt was lustily enjoying his breakfast sausage when he happened upon a particularly gruesome passage in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* describing the foul conditions under which that breakfast staple was made.

"There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust," wrote Sinclair. "There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it." Meat packers would scatter poisoned bread to kill the vermin, and then "rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together," destined for the tables of unsuspecting consumers—at least as Sinclair told the story.

Reading that passage allegedly caused the redoubtable TR to spit the sausage from his mouth in horrified disgust and pursue federal regulation of the food industry. The result was passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906. "I aimed at the public's heart," Sinclair said with some satisfaction, "and by accident I hit it in the stomach."

Granted, the story that Sinclair ruined Roosevelt's breakfast is probably apocryphal. But many Americans suffered a similar blow when it surfaced that the same tainted Chinese grain products—wheat and corn gluten, protein from soy

and rice, cornmeal and rice bran—that apparently poisoned pet food across North America may be found in foods, including breakfast sausage, destined for their tables.

Lurking in the background as Americans try to digest that unsettling news is an issue few have the stomach to contemplate: the perils of not controlling our daily bread. Thanks to what one FDA official calls the "globalization of the food supply," the U.S., once the legendary breadbasket to the world, has come to rely on foreign food sources that are questionable at best. This dependency even affects some domestic food sources, such as slaughter hogs that were fed the tainted Chinese grain derivatives.

On April 20, FDA inspectors announced that traces of melamine, a toxic industrial chemical used to make plastics, fire retardant, and fertilizers, had been found in Diamond Pet Foods feed given to pigs at California's American Hog Co. Within a few days, it was learned that an estimated 6,000 hogs in eight states had been given the pet food, and several hundred of them had entered the food supply.

This discovery was the proverbial other shoe many had dreaded since the March 16 announcement by Canada's Menu Foods that it was recalling various

kinds of pet foods that used Chinese-produced gluten, a protein extracted from grains such as wheat, corn, and rice and used as a binding element. Pet owners had reported the deaths of dozens of cats and dogs and severe kidney problems in hundreds more after they were fed products containing the Chinese gluten. Within a few weeks, some 60 million cans of pet food, marketed under 95 brand names, had been recalled across North America.

Investigators from the Food and Drug Administration found that some of the imported gluten from the pet food contained melamine. Officials in New York discovered some brands contained aminopterin, which is used in some countries as rat poison. Melamine contamination was later found in Chinese rice protein. In late April, inspectors discovered the presence of yet another toxin in some imported Chinese wheat gluten—cyanuric acid, which is used to clean swimming pools.

Melamine may have been added to the gluten "in order to increase what appears to be the protein level" and thereby "command a higher price" for the pet food, observed Dr. Stephen F. Sundlof, the FDA's leading veterinarian.

A public outraged by the deaths of cats and dogs from eating the contaminated pet foods was assured that the



damage was limited to “animal-grade” products. That assurance evaporated in mid-April with a recall announcement by Natural Balance Pet Foods. Canadian analyst Ann Martin points out that Natural Balance is among the brands made with “human grade” ingredients. That is, “ingredients that have been inspected and passed for human consumption.”

This was an ominous prelude to the discovery of traces of melamine in pigs’ urine in California and the revelation that nearly 3 million chickens in Indiana ate tainted food. While it’s not yet known how badly the food stream has been compromised, just a small amount of melamine-laced gluten could cause significant problems. “One pound of tainted wheat gluten could, if undetected, contaminate as much as a thousand pounds of food,” warned Peter Kovacs, former president of NutraSweet Kelco, in an April 23 *Washington Post* op-ed.

Investigators traced the poisoned wheat gluten to Xuzhou Anying Biological Technology Development Co., a tiny agricultural products vendor “whose main office seems to consist of just two rooms and an adjoining warehouse,” wrote David Barboza of *The Hamilton Spectator* in an on-site report. Company officials denied knowing how their gluten ended up in products sent to North America or that it contained melamine. The company has, however, frequently made requests for large quantities of “melamine scrap” through Internet trading sites.

The Chinese-produced gluten was imported into North America through a Las Vegas company called ChemNutra, which proudly advertises itself as “The China Source Experts.” According to its literature, the company imported some 4,000 tons of “high-quality nutritional and pharmaceutical chemicals” from “quality-assured” Chinese sources. The products were sold to manufacturers of food for both pets and humans.

ChemNutra’s CEO, Stephen S. Miller, claimed that Xuzhou Anying provided a chemical analysis showing that the gluten was free of contamination.

Melamine is a synthetic polymer created by fusing urea, a mammalian waste product, with formaldehyde. While useful in manufacturing and superb as a fire retardant, melamine is obviously not suitable as a foodstuff for animals, much less for human beings. *The Hamilton Spectator*’s Barboza points out that the

ucts,” Stokes told me. “We import anything that is cheaper to bring in than it is to produce here. And this in turn helps boost the profit of a handful of politically connected transnationals”—such as Tyson Foods, Archer Daniels Midland, and the grain giant Cargill—who “put extravagant profits ahead of the well-being of their communities.”

Stokes describes himself as a Ronald Reagan Republican, albeit one thoroughly disenchanted with the prevailing free-

## GIVEN THAT THE U.S. IS THE WORLD’S LARGEST WHEAT EXPORTER, AND CHINA IS THE WORLD’S LARGEST WHEAT IMPORTER, WHY ARE WE IMPORTING CHINESE WHEAT PRODUCTS OF ANY KIND?

wheat gluten supplied by Xuzhou Anying “could be used to make bread, bakery and other food items.”

Americans consume an estimated 400 million pounds of wheat gluten annually, and according to a U.S. Customs survey, more than 13 percent of imported wheat gluten comes from China. In other words, the same poison that crippled thousands of pets could eventually find its way into bagels, pizza, pasta, and pancakes.

But given that the U.S. is the world’s largest wheat exporter, and China is the world’s largest wheat importer, why are we importing Chinese wheat products of any kind?

An important part of the answer resides in the fact that as of last August the United States became a net food importer. Since 1990, notes Fred Stokes, executive director of the Organization for Competitive Markets, the U.S. “has run up a \$6 trillion cumulative trade deficit, which grows by \$2 billion a day—and the fact we’re a net food importer is just one illustration.”

“We’re a net importer of wheat, beef, and many other key agricultural prod-

ucts,” Stokes told me. A.V. Krebs is a left-leaning populist who heads the Corporate Agribusiness Research Project in Everett, Washington. Across the partisan gulf that separates them, Stokes and Krebs agree that the corporatist trade system has left our nation severely compromised in one of its most vital areas: the integrity of our food supply.

After 9/11, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) proposed a multi-billion-dollar, ten-year program to combat the threat of “agro-terrorism.” Senator Roberts urged the federal government to “move quickly to prevent attacks on grain and livestock production.” Krebs contends that the concern displayed by Roberts, “a dedicated supporter of ‘free trade’ and the disastrous 1995 ‘Freedom to Farm’ legislation” were “wrong-headed and misplaced.”

“As corporate agribusiness races to the bottom throughout the world to find the cheapest raw materials and cheapest labor possible for its giant food manufacturing system, we see under the guise of ‘free trade’ more and more food imports flooding our country,” notes Krebs. The past decade has seen consistent increases in supplementary food



imports, which compete with domestic products, and equally pronounced reductions in complementary imports, which do not. Supplanting U.S.-grown food with cheaper imported foreign food has created a threat at least as acute as that posed by “agro-terrorism,” according to Krebs.

“Growing conditions in foreign countries, little or no work and safety standards, the use of highly toxic chemical poisons previously banned in the US are all real and present threats to the integrity of much of the imported food we eat, yet in the name of improving the ‘bottom line’ by buying on the cheap, corporate agribusiness practices pose a far greater threat to human safety and health today than a handful of alarming anthrax exposures,” he writes.

Thomas Giessel, a grain farmer in Larned, Kansas, complains that even before they were thrown into uneven competition with low-cost imports from China, American farmers and ranchers were “already going above and beyond by burning up their assets to ensure mass quantities of cheap commodities.”

“Probably the easiest way to ‘contaminate our food supply’ is with imports,” stated Giessel. “Very little is inspected or even traceable. A lot is perishable and moves fast. But I am sure that angle is ‘trade-distorting’ in some politician’s mind.” Since everyone shares in the benefits of cheap food, Giessel maintains, “they can also share in the cost of maintaining that safe and constant supply.”

The 2002 Farm Bill required country of origin labeling (COOL) for meat, shellfish, produce, and peanuts, but most of its provisions are suspended until next September. And the COOL legislation doesn’t apply to products like wheat gluten, which can find their way into the food stream after being fed to livestock.

Although it would be considered an affront to free-trade ideology, Congress

Retired Air Force Col. Sam Gardiner warned in late 2006 that a sign that the U.S. is preparing to go to war with Iran would be an increase in leaks and disinformation designed to sell the war to the American public. There has been a steady drumbeat of negative reporting about Iran over the past year, but some stories that have recently surfaced in the media have attempted to reinforce two messages: first, Iran is materially involved in killing American soldiers in Iraq and now also in Afghanistan, and second, Iran is working hand in glove with al-Qaeda.

The claim that the Iranians are assisting the Taliban in Afghanistan, made initially on April 17 by U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Peter Pace based on the capture of Iranian-made weapons in Kandahar, was repeated by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, and White House Spokeswoman Dana Perino. The claim is questionable given the Iranians’ antipathy toward the Taliban, who regard Shi’ite Islam as a heresy and have massacred thousands of Shi’ites. Tehran almost declared war on Afghanistan after the Taliban executed eight Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997. Iran undoubtedly is cultivating ties with Afghanistan’s Shi’ite minority Hazars, who live close to the border between the two countries, but it would regard a return of the Taliban to power in Kabul as a catastrophe. As for the weapons, Afghanistan’s bazaars are awash with arms manufactured by Iran, Russia, the United States, and China, dating from the 1990s period when the Taliban fought the Northern Alliance. The Iranians provided the Northern Alliance with weapons, as did the United States and Russia.

A story in the *Sunday Times* of London on April 22, which claimed to be based on a leaked intelligence report from the Joint Terrorist Analysis Center of Britain’s MI-5, states that al-Qaeda in Iraq is intending to hit “a western target” in a “Nagasaki or Hiroshima size attack,” possibly utilizing a dirty bomb. It also claimed that al-Qaeda was being assisted in that effort by Iran. The assumption of the report was that al-Qaeda and Iran are working together in spite of the ideological divide between the two, though it conceded that Iran might be only “looking the other way” rather than actively engaging in the planned attack. Most intelligence experts are skeptical of the story and believe it is yet another attempt to tie Iran to international terrorism. Iran has a number of al-Qaeda members under arrest, and there are indications that it has engaged in some dialogue with the group, but it is difficult to imagine that it would ever consider dealing strategically with an organization that believes that Shi’ite Muslims are heretics and should be killed. The *Sunday Times*, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch, has frequently surfaced stories about Iran that have turned out to be either incorrect or fabricated, many of which might well be deliberate misinformation generated by the British government or by the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad.

And then there is the mysterious disappearance of Iranian former Revolutionary Guard Gen. Ali Reza Asgari. The *Times of London* and the *Washington Post* described in early March how the 63-year-old defector and “father of Hezbollah” escaped Iran together with his extended family. He was carrying documents conveniently “disclosing Iran’s links to terrorists in the Middle East,” according to an Israeli source. Asgari is actually a 43-year-old businessman who was apparently snatched off a street in Istanbul in February, has been out of the Iranian government for several years, and has not been in Lebanon since 1989. His family is still in Tehran and wants him back.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.*

does have the constitutional mandate to regulate foreign commerce. It can expand COOL requirements to include all food imports, thereby permitting American consumers to know who's producing the food they eat. It's quite likely that fully informed grocery shoppers would avoid Chinese imports—and they would be wise to do so.

During the past decade, food imports from China have increased roughly 20-fold to \$2.26 billion in 2006. This includes poultry, shellfish, apple juice, sausage casings, and spices of various kinds. Despite the fact that the USDA can only inspect a tiny fraction—an estimated 1.3 percent—of the food imported to the United States, a substantial volume of Chinese food products are rejected. Often this is because of inadequate or deceptive labeling, such as omitting the producer's name.

BECAUSE OF ITS **CHEAP LABOR** AND ARTIFICIALLY LOW PRICES **CHINA NOW MANUFACTURES MOST OF THE WORLD'S VITAMINS**, NOTES PETER KOVACS, AND IT WILL SOON COMMAND THE WORLD MARKET IN **FOOD ADDITIVES**.

Associated Press writer Christopher Boden points out that inspectors have turned away “pesticide-laden pea pods, drug-laced catfish, filthy plums and crawfish contaminated with salmonella.”

The April 27 issue of *USA Today* observed that “mass poisonings from tainted products are common” in China. There, Boden notes, “pesticides and chemical fertilizers are used in excess to boost yields while harmful antibiotics are widely administered to control disease in seafood and livestock. Rampant industrial pollution risks introducing heavy metals into the food chain.”

Contamination by antibiotics and pesticides prompted Europe and Japan to ban imports of Chinese honey and

shrimp. Even Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region controlled by Beijing, has halted some fish imports after inspectors found traces of the suspected carcinogen malachite green. Earlier this year, European officials discovered that a batch of Chinese-produced Vitamin A intended for use in baby formula contained *Enterobacter sakazakii*, a bacterium that can be lethal to newborns.

At least some of the contamination is deliberate. Chinese food producers “sometimes dye meats to make them look fresher and even sell fake milk powder for babies,” reported the April 12 *New York Times*. Some Chinese pig farmers have given their stock an asthma medicine in an attempt to produce leaner meat. Because eggs that have red yolks command higher prices domestically, some Chinese poultry

farmers mix an industrial dye called Sudan Red, a suspected carcinogen, into their chicken feed. Those eggs aren't sold in the United States, but traces of the dye have been found in products sold by the KFC fast-food chain.

Because of its “cheap labor [and] artificially low prices,” China now manufactures most of the world's vitamins, notes Peter Kovacs, and it will soon command the world market in food additives. “The uncontrolled distribution of low-quality imported food ingredients [from China] ... poses a grave threat to public health worldwide,” he insists.

Of course, China is not the only source of unsuitable food imports. Last October, FDA inspectors found salmo-

nella in Mexican and Costa Rican cantaloupes. A recall was ordered for 700,000 melons distributed by five U.S. importers, but by that time the produce had already blended into the retail stream.

In 2003, three Americans died from liver failure and more than 600 others across several states were left seriously ill after eating Mexican green onions that carried the Hepatitis A virus. The FDA alert describing the outbreak observed that “Hepatitis A is transmitted by fecal-oral route,” a mincingly delicate way of describing a very unpleasant disease vector.

Agency inspectors sent to examine the Mexican farms that produced the onions found appalling sanitary conditions well-suited to transmission of the virus. And the disease has been carried by other Mexican produce: seven years earlier, 175 Michigan schoolchildren contracted Hepatitis A after eating imported Mexican strawberries in their school lunches.

We've recently been hit with domestic food contamination episodes as well, from salmonella found in peanut butter produced in a run-down ConAgra plant in Georgia and spinach grown in California. These incidents demonstrate that the FDA is overwhelmed by an explosive growth in “the number of food processors and the amount of imported foods,” reported the *Washington Post*.

“Never before in history have we had the sort of system that we have now, meaning a globalization of the food supply,” observes Robert Brackett, director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at the FDA. It's enough to make an informed American lose his appetite. ■

*William Norman Grigg is editor at large for The Right Source (www.right-sourceonline.com)*

# Mississippi Compromise

The necessity—and peril—of trusting strangers

By Peter Wood

APRIL 1, 2007 MARKED the sesquicentennial of the publication of Herman Melville's last novel, *The Confidence-Man*. The actions the book describes also took place on April 1, year unspecified but near enough to 1857. On the morning of that day, a stranger, a man in a cream-colored suit, boards the steamship *Fidèle* in St. Louis, headed south.

*The Confidence-Man* has never had a great following. It did so poorly on its first publication that Melville quit writing novels and sunk into obscurity for his remaining 34 years. Recently, when I made the book required reading for students at my small liberal-arts college, I nearly provoked an insurrection. One outraged student submitted his copy to a student art show—run through with an oriental dagger. I staged dramatic readings with faculty members, which turned the student lounge into a Cherno-byl-like ghost town for the duration.

But the book does have its admirers. I am one, and I have two friends—neither of them English professors and both of them conservatives—who also feel its enchantment. In conservative circles in the Northeast, three people amount nearly to a teeming multitude, so I believe I am well within my rights to declare 2007 the sesquicentennial of this great, though neglected, conservative classic.

If you would like to join the celebration, however, beware. *The Confidence-Man* keeps some doubtful company: connoisseurs of chaos and the leftist lit-crit rabble. That's because Melville's

story casts a skeptical eye on the opportunistic bustle of American life and because the plot is filled with startling discontinuities and loose ends. The academic Left needs only the slightest scent of dissatisfaction with capitalism to sanctify a book as a classic. Postmodernists swoon at anything that seems to confirm their premise that life is incoherent.

But neither the anti-American Left nor the anti-everything po-mos can wrestle *The Confidence-Man* from its rightful place on the conservative bookshelf, even if not all that many conservatives have read it. If you haven't, trust me, you should. If you have, some reminders may be in order.

The very term "confidence man" comes from this book: Melville snagged it from a watch thief in New York whose m.o. was to engage strangers in conversation and then suddenly ask them, "Have you confidence in me to trust me with your watch until tomorrow?"

The stranger in the cream-colored suit who boards the *Fidèle* in St. Louis finds many passengers crowded around a notice tacked up outside the captain's office warning them to beware of a confidence man who has been plying his trade along the river.

Despite the warning, the confidence man—who is indeed among them—succeeds in swindling one after another. He disguises himself: a deaf mute; Black Guinea, a crippled ex-slave; Mr. Ringman, an impoverished traveling salesman wearing a funeral band; another fellow who collects contributions for a

Widow and Orphan Asylum among the Seminoles and also pitches a utopian scheme he calls the World's Charity; the president of the Black Rapids Coal Company; an herb doctor; a trader in child labor who styles himself an agent of the Philosophical Intelligence Office; and the Cosmopolitan, an extravagantly dressed world traveler who gives his name as Frank Goodman.

Can all these characters be one person? Melville never says. Instead, the novel proceeds from morning till midnight as a series of episodes in which the hard-bitten, skeptical, world-wise, and canny passengers on the *Fidèle* fall one by one to a man who probes their vanities then snares them in their own conceits. Possibly the confidence man isn't one person but a ring of thieves. Mr. Ringman's name could be a clue. But the book is titled *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, which seems strong warrant for thinking he is indeed one person. And while his accent and demeanor change frequently, something about the confidence man is recognizable through all the disguises.

He is a positive fellow, optimistic in the face of adversity, generous toward humanity, and disdainful only of cynics. He is patient, humbly endures slights, and stands ready to excuse faults in others. Though he is willing to diddle the rich, he doesn't specialize in their pelf. He is just as willing to despoil the poor or teach the proud a lesson. He is, in most cases, good company. He knows how to talk but is also an excellent listener.

Melville presumably could have written a more conventional novel around the exploits of this genial villain. In that case, we would identify with the conman and see the world as he presumably sees it: as a perpetual contest of wits. But Melville's unconventional telling of the tale denies us the opportunity to identify with the confidence man. He is too much a shape-shifting phantom whose inner life and motives are as hidden as his true appearance. We readers, to the contrary, are cast in the role of the passengers aboard the faithless *Fidèle*. We are on guard, but we don't know from what quarter the danger lies—or where to find the truth.

If the confidence man is one person rather than a ring of thieves, what person is he? He may be some kind of pagan god, unleashed on April Fool's Day to make sport of mankind. The opening sentence of the novel gives us an initial shove off this dock: "At sunrise on a first of April, there appeared, suddenly as Manco Capac at the Lake Titicaca, a man in cream-colors, at the water-side in the city of St. Louis." Manco Capac? No wonder the book was a commercial failure. Manco Capac was the son of the Incan sun god, who came to earth and, after tricking his siblings, established himself as the founder of the Incan Empire. This is a little con game in the first sentence, in which we are asked to trust a reference few readers without a library or an annotated edition could decipher.

If the confidence man is a pagan god, he doesn't display any supernatural powers. He does, however, seem distinctly devilish. His last catch of the day (under a "solar lamp" in the sleeping quarters) is a pious old man he finds reading the Bible. By the end of the exchange, the confidence man has prompted him to relinquish the Bible; he has purchased the false security of a patent lock, a money belt, and a counter-

feit bill detector, and he has been tricked into wearing a toilet seat as a life preserver.

*The Confidence-Man* presents the reader not only with unresolved ambiguities and obscure metaphors but also with misdirection. The flow of the novel is repeatedly interrupted, as though by islands that we must stop at and explore, with stories the characters tell each other. On three occasions, Melville stops the novel altogether to chat with the reader about whether the characters in the story are sufficiently realistic. Defending the apparent inconsistency of one character, for example, he glances skeptically at those psychologists who, "in the face of previous failures, still cherish expectations with regard to some mode of infallibly discovering the heart of man." If the book weren't 150 years old, we might think we are in the world of such lovers of self-referential artifice as Thomas Pynchon or John Barth.

But no, we are dead center in 19th-century America, and *The Confidence-Man* might even be read as a comic rejoinder to Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. The book is about America's commercial culture, which is necessarily founded on our ability to trust strangers. We must be able in short order to form workable relationships with people we don't know if we are going to thrive in the hustle of American life. In extending our trust to strangers, we expose ourselves to the danger of trusting thieves and charlatans—but we have no choice.

That danger makes us wary, but even the wariest are vulnerable. That wariness itself makes us vulnerable is part of Melville's message. The cynic thinks he is protected, but he is as liable to be made a chump as anyone else. The ship's barber hangs a sign outside his workplace declaring "No Trust," but the Cosmopolitan still manages to get a free

shave from him. A miser has spent a life clinging to his gold but gives it up in a trice for a false promise of even greater wealth.

The only sure way to avoid the wiles of the confidence man is not to engage life at all. Melville contemplates that option in the form of "a little, dried-up man," who describes himself as "numb in his sensibilities" and who refuses every invitation of the confidence man then appearing as the coal company executive. The little, dried-up man never plays cards, drinks, smokes, or tells stories. And the confidence man for once simply moves on.

Trust is indispensable to life, at least to life in a commercial democracy. If we were back in a village or on the farm and knew everyone from the saddle-maker to the bank president from our days in the one-room schoolhouse, trust might not be such a risk. But instead, we are aboard the society of strangers on the *Fidèle* and are reduced to making estimates. This may not be our ideal of American society, but it's a plausible picture of the actual state of affairs in 1857—and today. Early in the novel, Melville observes that the Mississippi has been cleared of the bloodthirsty brigands of an earlier epoch, but "where the wolves are killed off, the foxes increase."

Most of today's con artists are pretty clumsy. Like millions of Americans, I can't turn on my computer without getting a pile of messages telling me that my bank loan (for which I never applied) has been approved or that my credit card company wants to verify my account. Manhattan, where I currently live, abounds in hustlers with a more personal touch. The "glasses drop" is a favorite around the Empire State Building. You walk past a fellow who is holding his eyeglasses as he gazes up. As you pass him, he contrives that you bump into him, knocking his glasses to the



ground. He picks them up to find—alas!—you have broken one of the lenses. He is, however, willing to let it go if you pay him, say, \$40. His business has been hurt in recent years by shatter-proof lenses, and his glasses typically look like someone was worked them over with a ball-peen hammer, but I trust he finds enough guilt-ridden tourists to sustain the trade.

Melville's confidence man would not scorn this small-scale entrepreneur. To the contrary, I think I can hear him explaining that the man who asks others to trust him is always entitled to the benefit of the doubt because he is doing his part for the larger good of fostering trust in his fellow man. The confidence man, rightly understood, is a kind of philosopher who extols the hearty virtues of goodwill and trust and deplores both the frostbitten cynic and the cobwebbed misanthrope.

But while he would smile in approbation at Internet scammers and street hustlers, surely the confidence man would survey contemporary American society with still keener pleasure for its respectable follies. It is as if we have been remade as the children of Manco Capac who celebrate a perpetual April Fool's Day of zero down-payment mortgages, coast-to-coast Indian casinos, and Botoxed, implanted, excavated, exfoliated and scissored bodies. He would be touched by the homage of our tanning salons, ersatz shrines to his sun-god father. He would surely admire our press, which reached an apotheosis of sorts when journalist extraordinaire Katie Couric (\$15 million per annum) had to apologize that one of the ghostwriters of her personal video diary plagiarized an article by Jeffrey Zaslow in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Melville's confidence man might exhaust himself merely in the attempt to survey his legacy. Here we have sports stars who may as well be androids given

their chemical composition. Over yonder we have colleges and universities crammed full of students who can't learn and professors who can't teach. The entry-level requirement for English professors is a demonstrated incapacity to write a lucid English sentence conjoined with a profound ignorance of English literature. Our politics has always had a rich vein of self-satire, but an administration that offered up the clueless Harriet Miers as a nominee for the Supreme Court and the proudly baffled Alberto Gonzales as the nation's 80th attorney general has set a standard seldom matched since the days of Rutherford B. Hayes.

But let us leave the confidence man in contemplation of his good works. We are now all passengers aboard the *Fidèle*, bound God knows where. We would be foolish to trust too much of what our society serves up but even more foolish to think that we can thrive in a mood of sustained distrust. It isn't a pleasant prospect, and we might be tempted to turn away from Melville's mirror. But surely if we want to conserve what is best and worthiest in America, we had better look this fellow squarely in the eye. ■

*Peter Wood is the author, most recently, of A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now.*

# Beyond Baghdad

The surge isn't ending the insurgency but dispersing it.

By Stewart Nusbaumer

HEET, IRAQ—From an Army colonel in Baghdad's International Zone to a private in a lonely combat outpost on the Euphrates River, I was told and retold that Anbar Province—birthplace of the Sunni insurgency and homeland of Saddam Hussein's most fervent supporters—was a success. According to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "Anbar is a good news story." So I went in search of a light at the end of the tunnel.

"Three months ago, there was only one road in Heet that was somewhat secure," Warrant Officer James Malwauki explains. "Today we drive everywhere." A major battle swept the insurgents out, and now American forces are engaged in a long-term struggle to keep them at bay. The veteran Marine tempers his optimism: "You never know what tomorrow brings."

Tomorrow took us half an hour outside of Heet, into the desert to the makeshift headquarters of a kind of unofficial neighborhood watch. The major industry appears to be grazing sheep by the Euphrates River. Maybe a little fishing. But with the economy not developing and the anti-government movement fading, former insurgents and their supporters are anxious to join the expanding police force—not least of all for a paycheck.

The most important security force for counterinsurgencies is not the army but the police. This is especially true in Sunni Anbar, where the Iraqi army, dominated by Shia, is viewed as a hated foreign army of occupation. Local Sunni police better understand the social and security realities. Closer to the people, their eyes and ears are in the neighborhoods.

"We're going to take everyone's photograph and fingerprints," says Maliwauki, called "Gunner" by his Marines. He seems leery about the 230 recruits but is willing to register them in hope that a six-week training course will turn the motley band into legitimate policemen. Gunner clasps his hands, "Let's get started..."

"Sir!" a Marine interrupts from the doorway, "VBIED [Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device] just went off outside General Hamid's house and they want us there!"

This tomorrow brought horror.

"Need a casualty report," Gunner barks to Peter, his Iraqi translator. "Get the civilians out of here. Shurta [Iraqi policemen] on the perimeter. Officers over here, now."

Across the street, a row of buildings has collapsed. Part of a vehicle hangs from a roof, something strange and nasty dripping down. A man rushes past holding a motionless baby. On the other side of the road, in front of the general's house, half a dozen vehicles are heavily damaged. Everywhere people are wailing, dazed. An elderly woman simply stares. On a scorched and slightly depressed patch of the road lie a truck engine, broken axle, and twisted chassis—remnants of the bomber's craft.

A man with desperate eyes approaches and pleads for me to follow him. Inside a house, sobbing women sit on the floor forming a circle. The corpse's eyes are locked open. Her husband rubs her arm, refusing to see she is dead.

Peter tells Gunner, "I'm hearing on the radio it's 3 KIA and 2 WIA." A bolt of lightning rips the sky.

"These Shurta standing here doing nothing, I want them over there searching for casualties." Gunner points to the row of demolished buildings.

A young man wails, flapping his arms up and down. A young girl sits in a mud puddle, her brown eyes imploring.

"Sir, they're saying 10 KIA."

"Wounded?"

"Nothing on that yet. There is a report of a second VBIED in the area."

Gunner yells to his staff sergeant, "We need to tighten the perimeter."

"Already done."

"And we need men out in the desert—that desert is wide open!"

Peter points to a man, barefoot, mumbling, rain and tears pouring down his face. "He lost his entire family, wife and daughters."

Huge hail balls pelt down, bouncing off our helmets and vests. Gunner throws me a quick glance—"God truly hates us today." Then he's off directing Iraqi policemen to search for the dead; referring the walking wounded to the corpsman; insisting the civilians be pushed back; calling for witnesses to step forward; praying another VBIED doesn't hit; cussing the hail.

"Sir," a young Marine says too calmly, "there's a hand and leg over there."

In every calamity, miracles appear. Inside a pickup truck, two men were killed instantly, while a third walked out unscathed. The weird often follows: the survivor harangues Peter, demanding compensation for his destroyed truck. A baby is pulled from a pile of large stones, crying, but fine. Its tiny skull should have been crushed. A man's house is ringed by death and destruction, yet he walks around with a tiny scratch on the leg and one on his face. Gunner shakes his head in disbelief: "He'll be at evening prayers tonight." The man excitedly, obsessively tells his story: "I saw the driver pass. He was about 25 years old. He was wearing black, driving a blue truck very slow..." In one horrible flash came beautiful miracles, human strangeness, lifetime nightmares.

"Yeah," a blond Navy corpsman laments softly, "there are two dead babies over there. And a young girl. If I got here sooner," he pauses. "The girl

was still warm, I thought maybe—if I got here just a little sooner." His blue eyes melt into dark pain.

"Doc! Doc!" a Marine interrupts, "Over here fast!" The corpsman is gone. "Just doing my job" he will insist tonight and tomorrow night.

Staff Sergeant Todd Snyder walks past carrying a burlap bag. Blood drips from the bottom.

The casualty count climbed. Last I heard it was 15 killed and 35 wounded. Then I stopped listening. I was concentrating on not seeing the dead. Not seeing parts of the dead. Not seeing.

Back in February, with Baghdad's furnace of sectarian hate raging and the city an urban killing field, the military came up with a new security plan: sending 30,000 more troops into small outposts in the most violent neighborhoods.

The reaction was predictable. Insurgency theory says that when your more powerful enemy applies pressure, disperse and seek an environment where he is not as dominant. Thus the surge has been met with what our soldiers call "squirts." Large numbers of insurgents fled north to Diyala and Salah an-Din Provinces, south to Kerbala Province, west to Anbar, expanding the capital's violence to the provincial belt. The day after the blast outside Heet, the Islamic State of Iraq, a Baghdad-based coalition that includes al-Qaeda, took credit.

The squirters are circumventing the surge while our troops are dying in greater numbers in Baghdad's most restive neighborhoods. An update of the security plan calls for transferring troops to the newly volatile communities, but won't this send the insurgents back to a Baghdad patrolled by fewer troops? To distant provinces? To Anbar? Two days after the blast outside Heet, an IED exploded, hitting an Army convoy. ■

*Stewart Nusbaumer is embedded with various Marine and Army units in Iraq.*

# Doomed to Repeat

David Halberstam saw the ruin that can result from the best intentions.

By Wilson Burman

IF ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE had sat in the bleacher seats at Yankee Stadium for an entire summer, he would have been an even more interesting read. Fortunately, we had our own master observer of Americana. That the essence of the nation's character resides in its grandest pursuits as well as its simplest rituals is the legacy of David Halberstam.

Halberstam's death on April 23 was a terrible loss. He was a graceful and compelling writer. His gift was taking a subject—sometimes complex, sometimes mundane or over-covered—and distilling it for readers into immediacy and timelessness. His insight was linked inextricably to his effortless, after-midnight type of eloquence. *The Best and the Brightest*, his seminal work on the Vietnam War, combines these qualities, and the topic seemed uniquely suited for his sense of style. What better way to capture the mission creep, the corruption, the maddening incapacity of the Diem regime and its successors, or the intellectual rot in Washington, than with one of Halberstam's meandering, sparsely punctuated sentences?

Any meaningful discussion of Halberstam, and *The Best and the Brightest* in particular, means quoting at least some of his writing. It also requires thinking about the topic's relevance and lingering lessons. After four years, the Iraq-as-Vietnam analogy is more than a bit tired. But despite its exhaustive details on the Vietnam War, the book's real message is that the failures that led to the quagmire are an integral part of the nation's iden-

tity. The main players—Kennedy, Johnson, Bundy, McNamara, Rostow, Rusk, Taylor, Westmoreland—are almost allegorical symbols of the brilliance, determination, hubris, myopia, and hypocrisy that both account for the nation's greatness and cause periodic disasters. They were indeed the best and the brightest. But when “events are in the saddle and ride mankind,” as Emerson wrote, strengths can become fatal flaws. To Halberstam, General Westmoreland embodied that:

He liked the Vietnamese and was genuinely committed to their cause, but there was never a real sense or feeling for their frailties, fallibilities, their corruption, their loss of innocence (had they ever been innocent?). He was, finally, too American, too successful in the American and Western sense, too much a sterling product of a success-oriented country to feel the rhythms and nuances of this particularly failed society; he was the finest product of an uncorrupted country where doing good was always rewarded, one worked hard, played by the rules, went by the book, and succeeded. Success. Theirs was a corrupted, cynical society where the bribe, the lie, the decadence had become a way of life, where Vietnamese officers lied frequently and readily to their American counterparts. ... The Americans, particularly the military, were so straight and Westy

was the classic example; he was so American, like all Americans in Vietnam he wanted the Vietnamese to be Americans, he saw them in American terms, he could never seem to see them as themselves.

Substitute a few words here and there—leaving in “corrupted” and “bribe” and “this particularly failed society”—and it's just as relevant now in Baghdad's alleys and marketplaces as it was a generation ago when the Ivy League, spreadsheets, and flowcharts met their match in the jungles and rice paddies.

The description of Westmoreland highlights the perils of best intentions. America as bounding puppy—inherently virtuous, sometimes dangerously undisciplined, for better or worse always hopeful—is a recurring theme in Halberstam's writing:

The collapse in the South, the one force which the American leaders could not control, continued unabated. The Americans had always had the illusion that something might turn it around; a new leader in South Vietnam who would understand how to get with the program; a realization on the part of the South Vietnamese that their necks were on the line, that the feared enemy (the Americans' feared enemy, though perhaps not the feared enemy of the Vietnamese), the Communists, were about to walk into Saigon. Or magically, the right battalion com-

mander would turn up to lead ARVN battalions into battle against the Vietcong, or the right program would emerge, blending arms and pig-fatteners together to make the peasants want to choose our side. But nothing changed, the other side continued to get stronger, the ARVN side weaker. One reason the principals were always surprised by this, and irritated by the failure of their programs, was that the truth of the war never entered the upper-level American calculations; that this was a revolutionary war, and that the other side held title to the revolution because of the colonial war which had just ended. This most simple fact ... entered into the estimates of the American intelligence community and made them quite accurate. But it never entered into the calculations of the principals, for a variety of reasons; among other things to see the other side in terms of nationalism or as revolutionaries might mean a re-evaluation of whether the United States was even fighting on the right side. In contrast, the question of Communism and anti-Communism as opposed to revolution and antirevolution was far more convenient for American policy makers.

"Something might turn it around"—a spider-hole capture, purple fingers, a smart new general, or a surge. But Halberstam saw firsthand how hope turned into expectant paralysis and confidence into dangerous myopia. In that dynamic come easy bromides about "terrorists" and rejection of complex terms like "civil war." Honest analysis and re-evaluation become the enemy of convenience, military and political holding patterns set in, and the can gets kicked down the road for a perpetual six more months.

As the credibility gap grew and the war went south, Halberstam's anecdotes captured the delusions and the search for scapegoats:

And so in early 1967, Joe McGinniss, then just a young reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, would spend a day traveling with Westmoreland to the coastal town of Phan Thiet. There a young American officer startled McGinniss by giving an extraordinarily candid briefing on how bad the situation was, how incompetent the ARVN was. Westmoreland had demanded the briefing and the young American had been uneasy about giving it, apologizing for being so frank with a reporter present, but finally it had come pouring out: the ARVN soldiers were cowards, they refused to fight, they abused the population, in their most recent battle they had all fled, all but one man. That one man had stood and fought and almost single-handedly staved off a Vietcong attack. When the officer had finished his briefing, still apologizing for being so candid, Westmoreland turned to McGinniss and said, 'Now you see how distorted the press image of this war is. This is a perfect example—a great act of bravery and not a single mention of it in the *New York Times*.'

Halberstam was no stranger to the aiding-and-abetting charge. A Pulitzer Prize winner at the age of 30 for his reporting on Vietnam, he was an early target for criticism by the White House, Pentagon, and hawkish colleagues in the media. That's ironic because his later work showed that he, too, believed in American exceptionalism, albeit a version that had nothing to do with manifest destiny. It would be difficult to read *Summer of '49* or *The Children* or *Firehouse* and argue otherwise. The claim (and its variations) that "the media isn't

showing all the Iraqi schools we've painted" has subsided a bit recently but only because reality has become so undeniable.

One of Vietnam's lessons is the difficulty of ending a war that by definition has no finite or discernable end. On April 19, Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned Iraqis that "the clock is ticking" on America's patience. On March 26, Zalmay Khalilzad said, "I constantly signal to the Iraqi leaders that our patience, or the patience of the American people, is running out." Halberstam wrote of our message to South Vietnam's leadership in 1965:

Although they were warned that America would stand for no more, that they could not toy with a great power like this, that American support was becoming more difficult, they did not believe it. They had already learned that the worse things got and the more the Americans threatened them with disengagement, the more the Americans coughed up; that they had sunk the hook deeper into the Americans than the Americans had sunk it into them.

Just a few years into our involvement in Vietnam, we were warning about the limits of our patience. A decade and tens of thousands of KIA's later, we finally put our last helicopter where our mouth was and dislodged the hook.

One shortcoming of *The Best and the Brightest* is its original date of publication: 1972, three years before Saigon fell to the North. The narrative stops in 1968, and Halberstam started working on the book in early 1969, so it lacks a full treatment of Nixon as well as the Domino Theory and its dire warnings about the consequences of withdrawal. While parts of Southeast Asia weren't pretty after 1975, the warnings proved false; just six years



after the last chopper dusted off the roof of the U.S. embassy, the Reagan revolution had started along with the Soviet Union's final throes.

But it's a minor quibble. The value and relevance of the book is less its Vietnam-specific facts than its enduring lesson, which is that every generation is at risk of its own deceptions, delusions, and Five O'Clock Follies. And they are just as likely to result from the best of intentions—our “best and brightest”—as the worst. Because this is part of what it means to be American, knowing or even experiencing history is no guarantee against disaster. The ultimate validation of Halberstam's thesis appears ironically in the wisdom of John McCain, arguably one of our best and brightest, who wrote the book's reflective and tragically prophetic foreword:

It was a shameful thing to ask men to suffer and die, to persevere through god-awful afflictions and heartache, to endure the dehumanizing experiences that are unavoidable in combat, for a cause that the country wouldn't support over time and that our leaders so wrongly believed could be achieved at a smaller cost than our enemy was prepared to make us pay. No other national endeavor requires as much unshakable resolve as war. If the nation and the government lack that resolve, it is criminal to expect men in the field to carry it alone.

Halberstam saw firsthand the consequences of McCain's memory hole, of hubris and jingoistic adventurism, of lessons studied but never learned. With his passing, we lost one of our most sharp-eyed observers at a time when vigilance is more important than ever. ■

*Wilson Burman is the pen name for a New York City financial executive who writes The Cunning Realist blog.*

# Silent Partner

The agency he headed found no cause for war, but George Tenet told the president what he wanted to hear.

*This letter was sent to retired CIA Director George Tenet by a group of former intelligence officers. Tenet reportedly received a \$4 million advance for his new tell-all.*

Dear Mr. Tenet:

We write to you on the occasion of the release of your book, *At the Center of the Storm*. You are on the record complaining about the “damage to your reputation.” In our view the damage to your reputation is inconsequential compared to the harm your actions have caused for the U.S. soldiers engaged in combat in Iraq and the national security of the United States. We believe you have a moral obligation to return the Medal of Freedom you received from President George Bush. We also call for you to dedicate a significant percentage of the royalties from your book to the U.S. soldiers and their families who have been killed and wounded in Iraq.

We agree with you that Vice President Dick Cheney and other Bush administration officials took the United States to war for flimsy reasons. We agree that the war of choice in Iraq was ill-advised and wrong headed. But your lament that you are a victim in a process you helped direct is self-serving, misleading and, as head of the intelligence community, an admission of failed leadership. You were not a victim. You were a willing participant in a poorly considered policy to start an unnecessary war and you share culpability with Dick Cheney and George Bush for the debacle in Iraq.

You are not alone in failing to speak up and protest the twisting and shading

of intelligence. Those who remained silent when they could have made a difference also share the blame for not protesting the abuse and misuse of intelligence that occurred under your watch. But ultimately you were in charge and you signed off on the CIA products and you briefed the President.

This is not a case of Monday morning quarterbacking. You helped send very mixed signals to the American people and their legislators in the fall of 2002. CIA field operatives produced solid intelligence in September 2002 that stated clearly there was no stockpile of any kind of WMD in Iraq. This intelligence was ignored and later misused. On October 1 you signed and gave to President Bush and senior policy makers a fraudulent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)—which dovetailed with unsupported threats presented by Vice President Dick Cheney in an alarmist speech on August 26, 2002.

You were well aware that the White House tried to present as fact intelligence you knew was unreliable. And yet you tried to have it both ways. On October 7, just hours before the president gave a major speech in Cincinnati, you were successful in preventing him from using the fable about Iraq purchasing uranium in Africa, although that same claim appeared in the NIE you signed only six days before.

Although CIA officers learned in late September 2002 from a high-level member of Saddam Hussein's inner circle that Iraq had no past or present contact with Osama bin Laden and that the Iraqi leader considered bin Laden an

enemy of the Baghdad regime, you still went before Congress in February 2003 and testified that Iraq did indeed have links to Al Qaeda.

You showed a lack of leadership and courage in January of 2003 as the Bush Administration pushed and cajoled analysts and managers to let them make the bogus claim that Iraq was on the verge of getting its hands on uranium. You signed off on Colin Powell's presentation to the United Nations. And, at his insistence, you sat behind him and visibly squandered CIA's most precious asset—credibility.

INSTEAD OF **RESIGNING IN PROTEST**, WHEN IT COULD HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE, **YOU REMAINED SILENT** AND ALLOWED THE **BUSH ADMINISTRATION** TO CITE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THESE DELIBERATIONS TO **JUSTIFY THEIR DECISION TO GO TO WAR.**

You may now feel you were bullied and victimized but you were also one of the bullies. In the end you allowed suspect sources, like Curveball, to be used based on very limited reporting and evidence. Yet you were informed in no uncertain terms that Curveball was not reliable. You broke with CIA standard practice and insisted on voluminous evidence to refute this reporting rather than treat the information as suspect. You helped set the bar very low for reporting that supported favored White House positions, while raising the bar astronomically high when it came to raw intelligence that did not support the case for war being hawked by the president and vice president.

It now turns out that you were the Alberto Gonzales of the intelligence community—a grotesque mixture of incompetence and sycophancy shielded by a genial personality. Decisions were made, you were in charge, but you have no idea how decisions were made even though you were in charge. Curiously,

you focus your anger on the likes of Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld, and Condi Rice, but you decline to criticize the President.

Mr. Tenet, as head of the intelligence community, you failed to use your position of power and influence to protect the intelligence process and, more importantly, the country. What should you have done? What could you have done?

For starters, during the critical summer and fall of 2002, you could have gone to key Republicans and Democrats in the Congress and warned them of the

pressure. But you remained silent. Your candor during your one-on-one with Sir Richard Dearlove, then-head of British Intelligence, of July 20, 2002 provides documentary evidence that you knew exactly what you were doing; namely, “fixing” the intelligence to the policy.

By your silence you helped build the case for war. You betrayed the CIA officers who collected the intelligence that made it clear that Saddam did not pose an imminent threat. You betrayed the analysts who tried to withstand the pressure applied by Cheney and Rumsfeld.

Most importantly and tragically, you failed to meet your obligations to the people of the United States. Instead of resigning in protest, when it could have made a difference in the public debate, you remained silent and allowed the Bush Administration to cite your participation in these deliberations to justify their decision to go to war. Your silence contributed to the willingness of the public to support the disastrous war in Iraq, which has killed more than 3300

Americans and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

If you are committed to correcting the record about your past failings then you should start by returning the Medal of Freedom you willingly received from President Bush in December 2004. You claim it was given only because of the war on terror, but you were standing next to General Tommy Franks and L. Paul Bremer, who also contributed to the disaster in Iraq. President Bush said that you “played pivotal roles in great events, and [your] efforts have made our country more secure and advanced the cause of human liberty.”

The reality of Iraq, however, has not made our nation more secure nor has the cause of human liberty been advanced. In fact, your tenure as head of the CIA has helped create a world that is more dangerous. The damage to the credibility of the CIA is serious but can eventually be repaired. Many of the U.S. soldiers maimed in the streets of Fallujah and Baghdad cannot be fixed. Many will live the rest of their lives missing limbs, blinded, mentally disabled, or physically disfigured. And the dead have passed into history.

Mr. Tenet, you cannot undo what has been done. It is doubly sad that you seem still to lack an adequate appreciation of the enormous amount of death and carnage you have facilitated. If reflection on these matters serves to prick your conscience we encourage you to donate at least half of the royalties from your book sales to the veterans and their families, who have paid and are paying the price for your failure to speak up when you could have made a difference. That would be the decent and honorable thing to do.

*Philip Giraldi, Ray McGovern, Larry Johnson, Jim Marcinkowski, Vince Cannistraro, David MacMichael, Tom Maertens, Pat Lang*

# Al-Qaeda's Waiting Game

Bush isn't winning in his battle against our real enemy.

By Michael Scheuer

AMERICANS TEND TO FORGET that while we were surprised by the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda was not. The attacks' exact date was known to bin Laden and two or three others only six days before Sept. 11, 2001, but they had long known the attacks were coming. Thus al-Qaeda was able to move important operatives, archives, materiel, and other assets out of Afghanistan in advance.

The al-Qaeda fighters who stayed to fight the U.S.-led coalition came from the organization's insurgent arm—which is al-Qaeda's largest component—and, according to the U.S. military, they turned in an excellent combat performance before withdrawing to Pakistan and elsewhere. U.S.-led forces, therefore, were never fighting remnants but a professional insurgent force that had no intention of standing and dying in the face of overwhelming American power. Al-Qaeda commanders applied to the letter Mao's guerrilla-war lessons and their own experience fighting the Red Army.

So al-Qaeda got out of Afghanistan in good shape and with little need to regroup, if regrouping is defined, as it has been by U.S. officials, as a thoroughly defeated military force trying to pull its fractured pieces back together. Al-Qaeda simply moved from one safe haven to another—from Afghanistan to Pakistan's Pashtun-dominated border provinces. From there, with the Taliban, it began to plot the reconquest of Afghanistan. Sayf al-Adl, then al-Qaeda's military commander, has written that bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and company concluded

that it would take about seven years to re-establish Taliban rule. Al-Qaeda made its plans on that timetable and sent many of its insurgent fighters home to rest until they were needed. Far from regrouping, al-Qaeda decided to disperse and wait. Al-Adl adds that many of these fighters were in tears when they learned they would not immediately fight the U.S. military. Presumably their tears have now turned to grins.

Beyond failing to defeat or even permanently impair al-Qaeda Central—the forces commanded by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri—we now confront a substantial number of al-Qaeda franchises, 29 of whom have publicly declared their presence in such places as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt.

Terrorism experts typically describe these franchises as replacing the al-Qaeda threat that the military claims to have mopped up. This is incorrect. Al-Qaeda Central remains in business and able to attack the United States. The franchises form a second tier of threats in their local areas. In other words, where there was once one threat, there are now many. The proliferation of these franchises also underscores bin Laden's startling ability to continue inspiring and instigating Islamists to *jihad* despite his infrequent media appearances.

Thus the United States and its allies are not experiencing a resurgence of al-Qaeda and Taliban action, with the suggestion of spontaneous, unplanned attacks that designation carries. Rather, we are witnessing the early to early-middle phases of a long-planned

campaign to reclaim Afghanistan for Islam. America's opponents are not swinging wildly at us but are progressing along a path they have delineated with patience, common sense, and professionalism.

Capitalizing on the swell of anti-Americanism that the Iraq War provoked across the Muslim world, al-Qaeda has plenty of manpower and has imported the tactics of roadside bombing and suicide attacks perfected by its forces in Iraq. And because of the 2005-06 run-ups in oil prices, al-Qaeda's Arab benefactors are flush with cash. What this means for the United States is that al-Qaeda will be at the Taliban's side when, over the next several years, U.S.-led forces are evicted from Afghanistan and Mullah Omar once again unfurls the prophet's banner over that country.

And this may be the least of it. American defeat on the ground in Afghanistan could well be accompanied by another massive al-Qaeda attack inside the United States.

Our political and military leaders have swallowed the theory that al-Qaeda is a "terrorist group," so they believe, and have told Americans, that by fighting al-Qaeda on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are preventing attacks in the United States. Nothing could be farther from the truth, but, as Jefferson once said, "The moment a person forms a theory, his imagination sees in every object only the traits that favor that theory."

The al-Qaeda forces we are fighting in those two countries are the group's

insurgent forces, not its “special forces”—those that attacked Washington and New York on 9/11. As noted, those forces left Afghanistan before the U.S. Marines landed and have been planning new attacks since then in Pakistan’s border provinces, Saudi Arabia, Britain, and other secure locations in Europe, across the Muslim world, and perhaps even in the United States and Canada.

The lack of an al-Qaeda attack inside the United States since 9/11 proves only that there has not been an al-Qaeda attack in the United States since 9/11. That fact is in no way proof that our war on al-Qaeda has destroyed its capacity to hit America at home. The most that should be claimed is that the CIA rendition program may have disrupted and delayed operational planning. Alternatively, bin Laden may have decided that a near-term attack would reunite Americans at a time when our own folly is already sufficient to make the U.S. the second superpower to be defeated by Allah’s *mujahedin*.

The question, therefore, is how much damage have we inflicted against al-Qaeda’s terrorist arm? In terms of its most veteran leadership cadre, quite a bit. Under the CIA’s rendition program—which I founded, first managed, and am accountable for—numerous senior al-Qaeda lieutenants have been incarcerated since mid-1995—those seized during President Clinton’s tenure in Arab jails, those during President Bush’s in U.S. facilities.

But here is where our leaders’ semantic games play havoc with U.S. security. As Americans watch Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, Khalid bin Attash, and others testify at Guantanamo Bay, they should realize that these men represent the only successes our government has scored against the al-Qaeda arm that can attack inside the United States.

These are solid victories, but they have little strategic impact on al-Qaeda, for it is an insurgent group, not

a terrorist group as our addled bipartisan leadership insists. By definition, it is always fighting a massively more powerful enemy. Because insurgent chiefs anticipate significant and continuing senior leadership losses, they put tremendous amounts of time and resources into succession planning. When men like Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Khalid bin Attash are captured, al-Qaeda as an organization is badly stunned. But it is not permanently disabled because it has trained understudies waiting to assume starring roles. Indeed, al-Qaeda often rubs this reality in America’s face by quickly publishing the name and curriculum vitae of the successor to a captured or killed senior leader. Al-Qaeda has lost at least four military commanders since 1989 and has continued not only to fight its war but to expand it across five continents.

The rendition program is the sole effective U.S. government attack against al-Qaeda’s special forces. But it is not nearly enough. As the 9/11 Commission report documented, my senior officers and I told our superiors and the director of central intelligence in 1997 that the best the rendition program could do was to “hold the ring” until a much broader, U.S.-government-wide anti-al-Qaeda program could be put in place. The best rendition efforts could do was to disrupt the group’s planning and operations by capturing senior leaders.

Today, the CIA is continuing to hold the ring—and increasingly the bag. Al-Qaeda has become smarter in terms of personal and organizational security, so fewer of its senior special forces leaders make mistakes that provide the chance to capture them. They also have learned to stay out of Pakistan’s major cities, where President Musharraf’s security services are facilitating their capture.

Americans stand at hell’s gate in regard to al-Qaeda. Our country is vulnerable to attacks worse than those

visited upon us on 9/11, yet Congress is busy reinstalling risk-aversion at the CIA by tearing the guts out of its rendition program. Since 9/11, the U.S. military has been engaged with the insurgent forces of al-Qaeda and its allies, forces entirely apart from the al-Qaeda forces that attacked in America.

All the while, al-Qaeda’s ability to plan and execute attacks in the United States has been enormously aided by the Bush administration and the leadership of both parties in Congress. Like his Democratic predecessor, President Bush has cut manpower and funding for the Nunn-Lugar program, in place since 1991 to secure the Soviet nuclear arsenal, giving al-Qaeda a window of opportunity to acquire its weapon of choice for a domestic U.S. attack. The administration and Congress also have done nothing to effectively police and control U.S. borders, thereby failing to give state and local law-enforcement agencies a fighting chance to find out who is in America and what they are up to. And as a death-wish coda to the foregoing symphony of failures, Washington recently decided to issue 10,000 more visas to Saudi students.

More than a century and a half ago, Abraham Lincoln told Americans, “If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time or die by suicide.” Tragically, Lincoln’s words are still pertinent. While the next knife plunged into America’s innards will be labeled “al-Qaeda,” the intellectual, policy, and political failures that accelerate its thrust and increase its lethality will be labeled “Made in the U.S.A. by presidents, senators, and congressmen.” ■

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*Michael Scheuer, a 22-year veteran with the CIA, created and served as the chief of the agency’s Osama bin Laden unit at the Counterterrorist Center. He is also the author of Imperial Hubris.*



# Demography Is Destiny

Birth rates in the Holy Land may force a two-state solution.

By Leon Hadar

FROM TIME TO TIME, I visit an Israeli blog where much of the discussion has been focused on “demographic problems”—code words for the rising concern among Israelis that if rates of growth of Jewish and Arab populations in the Holy Land continue at their current levels, the Jewish state will cease to be Jewish.

One blogger, whose screen-name is “Logic,” recently came up with an original idea: the solution lies in converting Israel’s Muslims to Judaism and encouraging intermarriage between Jews and Arabs, leading to assimilation of the Arabs into the majority Jewish population. “In the current situation in which Jews dominate the state’s culture, intermarriage would help bring to the world a new generation of kids with Jewish instead of Arab identity,” Logic explained.

That even intelligent Israeli Jews like Logic fly into fantasyland when they ponder ways to maintain their eroding majority suggests that an Iranian nuclear bomb is not the main threat to Israel’s existence. Instead, it is the demographic bomb that is causing Israelis sleepless nights. After all, Israel’s own nuclear capability would probably succeed in deterring Iran. It is less likely that Israel’s Jews would be able to defeat the Muslims in the battle of the birth rates. In that biological struggle, Palestinian Muslims, with their average birth rates ranging from 7 children per woman in the Gaza Strip to 5.4 in the West Bank to 4.7 in Israel, seem to be besting Israeli Jews, whose average

birth rate is 2.6. Is it surprising that the most popular name given to baby boys in the Jewish state these days is Muhammad?

In fact, in the area stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River—which includes the state of Israel within the 1967 “green line,” the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip—non-Jews are edging towards parity with the Jewish population of about 5.5 million. If one adds to the 4.5 million Palestinian Arabs (1.4 million in Israel proper, 1.7 million in the West Bank, 1.1 million in Gaza, and 300,000 in East Jerusalem) the more than 300,000 Israeli citizens who are classified by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics as “others” (mostly Christians who have immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union, as well as more than 600,000 foreigners residing in the Jewish state) there are probably close to 11 million people living in the Holy Land, divided almost equally between Jews and non-Jews. And even if one excluded the “others” and foreign workers, the point of parity between Jews and Arabs in Eretz Israel/Palestine could arrive before 2010, according to Sergio Della Pergola, a Hebrew University demographer.

From the perspective of the secular Zionist leadership that still dominates Israel and would like to preserve a democratic Jewish ethos, the reality on the ground is already worse than the numbers indicate. In Galilee, Arabs constitute at least 50 percent of the population, and as a result of illegal migration of Arabs from the occupied territories to

Galilee, combined with migration of Jews from the area, the Arabs may have only a slim demographic edge. At the same time, in the Negev Desert, Beduines compose 25 percent of the population, and in the area around Beer Sheva, where 250,000 Jews live, Beduines constitute about 40 percent of the population and are expected to become a majority of 350,000 there before the year 2020. Arnon Soffer, one of Israel’s leading demographers, contends that the combination of large population growth, illegal settlements, and rising crime rates “is going to be a catastrophe” and predicts “an intifadah of major proportions, beyond imagining” among the Negev’s Beduines.

But it is in Jerusalem that the nation’s demographic dilemmas are being exposed in a dramatic way. At a recent conference in the city, attended by the Jewish mayor, Uri Lupolianski, demographers predicted that by 2040, Jerusalem will have an Arab majority and the city will probably be led by an Arab mayor. While he expects that Jews will still maintain a majority of about 65 to 70 percent by 2020, Sergio Della Pergola believes that when it comes to those under the age of 15, the Jewish majority will probably narrow to less than 55 percent in the next 13 years.

At the same time, there has been a steady migration of secular middle-class Jews from Jerusalem to the Tel Aviv-Haifa corridor on the Mediterranean coast, leaving behind a large ultra-Orthodox Jewish population—Haredim—most of whom are alienated from the

secular Jewish majority, do not serve in the military, and refrain from marrying into non-ultra-Orthodox families. That Lupolianski himself is a Haredi reflects the growing demographic power of this group in Jerusalem, a city that two decades ago was led by the cosmopolitan and liberal mayor, Teddy Kollek. Thus, with secular Jews and Christian Arabs leaving the city in droves, the demographic battle in Jerusalem could be led by the non-Zionist Jewish Haredim and fundamentalist Muslims, a nightmare scenario for Israel's Westernized Zionist elites. The Haredim, whose birth rate is higher than that of secular Israelis, number about 600,000, and their percentage of the Jewish population is bound to grow in the coming years.

While there is no doubt that the massive immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union has helped secular Jews to preserve their majority inside Israel, it has also given birth to a new ethnic-religious community of between 200,000 to 300,000 Hebrew-speaking Christians, many of whom even serve in

Olmert, and for many members of Israel's elite, the children of the secular European Zionist settlers who founded the State of Israel, there is a growing recognition that Israel's future as a Western Jewish state is on the line. If Israel continues to occupy the Arab territories, its secular Zionist identity will be diluted and their children will end up leaving a country in which Jewish Haredim and Muslim fundamentalists continue fighting over the holy sites in Jerusalem. Two of Olmert's children live in the West (in New York and Paris), where they have joined the children of Ehud Barak and Yitzhak Rabin and over 500,000 former Israelis, most of whom live in North America.

The bottom line is obvious to most Israelis: there is still a small Jewish majority between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, but owing to current demographic trends, it is quickly diminishing. That means that in a few years, Israel must face the most dramatic consequence of its demographic trajectory: it cannot preserve the two

in the West Bank following last year's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, including the uprooting of 9,000 Jewish settlers, is taking place when Israel is under little international pressure to move in that direction. President George W. Bush has basically given Israel a free hand in responding to the second Palestinian Intifada. In fact, the decision by former Prime Minister Sharon to withdraw from Gaza was not received with much enthusiasm by policymakers in Washington, who expressed concern that the move would project an image of weakness on the part of Israel. Sharon and his successor Olmert, who have never had much confidence that bilateral negotiation between the Israelis and the Palestinians would produce a viable agreement. Both had hoped that with Washington's blessing Israel could continue pursuing its unilateral strategy of withdrawing from the heavily Arab-populated areas of the West Bank while maintaining control over the large Jewish settlements there and over East Jerusalem and by building a security fence that would separate an Israel with a Jewish majority of 75 to 80 percent from the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

While the fence seems to have deterred Palestinian terrorists trying to enter Israel, it has certainly not helped pacify the Gazans and the West Bankers, whose economic conditions have worsened as a result of an economic embargo imposed on the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and who struggle with restrictions on their movement as a consequence of the fence that separates them from Jerusalem. The launching of missiles from Gaza into Israel and the rising Israeli-Palestinian violence in the aftermath of last year's kidnapping of an Israeli soldier have led many Israelis to conclude that only a formal agreement between Israel and the PA could create the conditions that would enable Israel

**IF IT REMAINS IN THE TERRITORIES, IT WILL HAVE TO GRANT CIVIL RIGHTS TO THE MILLIONS OF ARABS WHO ARE BOUND TO PRESS FOR A CHANGE IN THE IDENTITY OF ISRAEL AS A JEWISH STATE.**

the Israeli army, which explains why the military now allows new recruits to pledge allegiance using the New Testament.

It is this demographic reality that explains why Israeli leaders, including many members of the nationalist political Right like former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his successor Ehud Olmert, who not long ago were advocating that the Jewish state annex Judea and Samaria, are now favoring an almost complete Israeli disengagement from these territories. For Sharon and

central components of its national identity—being Jewish and democratic. If it remains in the territories, it will have to grant civil rights to the millions of Arabs who are bound to press for a change in the identity of Israel as a Jewish state. And if it refuses to permit the Gazans and the West Bankers to vote in Israeli elections, it will cease to be a democratic state, and would be transformed into a Middle Eastern version of apartheid-era South Africa.

Paradoxically, rising public support for withdrawing from the biblical lands

to withdraw from the West Bank. The catch is that even if a moderate Palestinian government replaced Hamas any time soon, no Palestinian leader would ever agree to continuing Israeli control of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and to exclusive Israeli control of Jerusalem. He would also be expected to demand that Israel agree to recognize

of the West Bank coupled with the complete cessation of the buildup of Jewish settlements, and the implementation of security arrangements backed by European troops. After a year of two of relative peace and after aid and investment starts to flow into the Palestinian territories and Israel is satisfied with the security arrangements, the two sides might

coalition as minister of strategic affairs and as a deputy prime minister, insists that Israel would have no choice but to force these Israeli Arabs to join their Palestinian compatriots in their new state. Lieberman, who lives in one of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, represents the political power that the nationalist-religious bloc still retains in Israel and that, together with the fundamentalists of Hamas, would make it difficult for the most competent American negotiator to help the two sides reach a sustainable ceasefire, not to mention an accord on the final status of the territories. Moreover, the election of a foreign-policy clone of George W. Bush—a John McCain or a Rudy Giuliani—would make it even less likely that Washington would consider jumping into the cold water of Israel-Palestinian negotiations and, if anything, would place the issue on the policy backburner as the new president continues to emphasize the role Israel supposedly plays in the war against “Islamofascism.”

Under that scenario, Israel, led by, say, the neocons’ favorite politician, Benjamin Netanyahu, could take steps to consolidate and expand the Jewish settlements in the territories while continuing to erect the security fence. It would be only a matter of time before the boiling anger and resentment in the territories exploded into a third and more violent Intifadah. A Palestinian terrorist attack *à la* 9/11 in Tel Aviv or an attempt by Israeli right-wingers to blow up the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem could produce a major escalation that would turn into an all-out civil war, leading to ethnic cleansing in Israel and the occupied territories and igniting civil unrest among Muslims worldwide. Pressure, including threats of oil embargoes by Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, would mount on the Europeans and the Americans to “do something,” resulting in the deployment of NATO troops to the Holy

**EVEN IF A MODERATE PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT REPLACED HAMAS ANY TIME SOON, NO PALESTINIAN LEADER WOULD EVER AGREE TO CONTINUING ISRAELI CONTROL OF THE JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK AND TO EXCLUSIVELY ISRAELI CONTROL OF JERUSALEM.**

the “right of return” of Palestinian refugees, which the political Right in Israel would not accept.

The conventional wisdom in Israel now is that no Israeli-Palestinian accord, and by extension, no Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, could take place without a more activist diplomatic role by Washington, which will probably not happen before President Bush leaves office. The next president will likely launch a diplomatic campaign to restore American credibility in the world, the centerpiece of which would be an effort to resolve American problems in the Middle East by bringing an end to the occupation of Iraq, re-establishing diplomatic ties with Iran, and reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

But it is not clear that with so much blood shed by both sides since the start of the second Intifada in 2000, Israelis and Palestinians would be able to agree on the final status of the territories. An American envoy might be able to help work out a “cease-fire plus” agreement that would lead to the establishment of a stable Palestinian government, the end of the economic sanctions, the start of Israeli disengagement from some parts

be ready to confront the core issues that separate them: Jerusalem, the future of the Jewish settlements, and the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees.

One of the ideas discussed before and during the Camp David peace talks of 2000 was to exchange an Israeli territory—the so-called “triangle” around the Arab town of Umm-el-Fahm that is adjacent to the border with the West Bank and in which between 200,000 to 300,000 Arabs (who are Israeli citizens) reside—for the Palestinian territories in which a similar number of Jews have settled in recent years. The proposal would have made sense from an Israeli Jewish perspective since it would have reduced Israel’s Arab population by about 250,000 and would have allowed the Israelis to withdraw from the territories while retaining their control over the Jewish settlements there. But it was rejected by the Arab Israeli citizens who preferred to remain in the prosperous Israeli state instead of having their towns and villages integrated into a Third World state called Palestine.

But Avigdor Lieberman, an immigrant from Russia who is the leader of the nationalist Yisrael Beytenu Party and who has joined the current ruling

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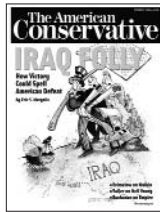
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Land to separate the two warring sides and the convening of a Dayton-style international conference that imposes an agreement on the Israelis and the Palestinians.

But even under scenarios that conclude with eventual Israeli disengagement from the Arab occupied territories, the Jewish state in which 1.4 million Arab citizens constitute more than 20 percent of the population could still face a major challenge to its identity.

Arab Israelis have long complained of being shortchanged in government allocations for public services, education, and health and social benefits. In recent years, leaders in the community have been proposing that the Arabs in Israel start campaigning not only for civil rights but also for collective rights as a national-cultural community, not unlike what the Basques in Spain, the Scots in Britain, or the Kurds in Iraq, have been trying to achieve. Leading figures, including members of the Knesset, lawyers, and academics have published a manifesto rejecting the idea of Israel as a Jewish state and demanding that Israel become "a state for all its citizens" and not only for its Jews. They have asked that both the Israeli flag and the national anthem be changed to represent non-Zionist themes. Other Arab opinion-makers who recognize that the Israeli public would reject such demands have proposed that the Arabs in Israel demand political and cultural autonomy in part of Galilee, the "triangle," and the Negev, which could be seen as a first step towards seceding from Israel and uniting with the Palestinian state, leaving the Jewish state with a smaller territory.

Israelis who are worried about the ticking demographic bomb warn that without Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state—the "two-state solution"—Israel would eventually have to

accede to the demands of the Arabs who will make up at least 50 percent of the population of the entire Holy Land and grant them civil and political rights. This is the basis for the "one-state solution" that Palestinian-American Ali Abunimah describes in his book, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*, in which Jews and Arabs would share power on the national, regional, and local levels—rather as the Flemish and Walloons live together in Belgium.

The problem is that many of the experiments with binational and multinational states have led to either violent (Yugoslavia) or peaceful (Czechoslovakia) divorces, and Belgium, like Canada, is not a binational but merely a bilingual state. It's difficult to imagine that Jews and Arabs, each representing an ancient civilization that has been traumatized by history and are now in the midst of complex and sometimes violent changes, are going to live happily ever after in one state. Moreover, since each community is divided among many subgroups—secular Jews, Haredim, modern Orthodox, and Hebrew-speaking Christians on the Israeli side, secular Muslims, Christians, Muslim fundamentalists, Druze, Circassians, Beduines, and Armenians on the Arab side—the political model that could evolve in Israel-Palestine would probably resemble the multi-ethnic and multi-religious system that exists in Lebanon today.

The "Lebanonization" of the Holy Land would clearly be the worst-case scenario, unleashing even more violence and full-blown civil war. Perhaps when it ends the two sides won't have any other choice but to divide the land into, yes, two states. ■

*Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies and author, most recently, of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.*



# One Nation, Divisible

In its quest to embrace the world, America sacrificed the unifying totem of equality for fractious diversity.

By Carol Iannone

PERHAPS THE MOST infuriating aspect of the illegal immigrant mass protests held in various American cities is the boldness and belligerence of the participants. People who are breaking our laws simply by being here loudly proclaim their “rights” and express their contempt for America—in Spanish.

This behavior seems outrageous, but it is the logical outcome of ideas promoted by America herself in recent decades.

The 1965 Immigration Reform Act both ended the national quota system that had virtually excluded most Africans and Asians from immigrating to this country and also greatly facilitated the immigration of Latin Americans. Its supporters saw the act as an extension of the civil-rights legislation of the same period and promised that it would not change America culturally or even ethnically because they believed—or affected to believe—that few people would actually come. In reality, passage significantly altered America’s demography. Still, the thinking went, this would mean no significant change in our national character and self-understanding. The newer groups would assimilate as past waves of immigration had. After all, it was said, we are defined by our ideals, which are universal and to which all could subscribe.

Some recalled the words of Abraham Lincoln when a similar question arose with regard to the newer Americans of his day. “We have ... among us perhaps

half our people who are not descendants at all” of the American revolutionaries, Lincoln noted during his 1858 senatorial campaign. “If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they have none, they cannot carry themselves back into that glorious epoch and make themselves feel that they are part of us.” But then Lincoln set forth the gold standard for inclusion in the American polity. When, he declared, these newer Americans

look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,’ and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are. That is the electric cord in that Declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men together, that will link those patriotic hearts as long as the love of freedom exists in the minds of men throughout the world.

The recognition of the equality of all men under God meant that freedom, or self-government, was the natural right of

all who understood and claimed it. This “electric cord” of understanding would form the bond of unity for Americans, whatever their background.

As mass immigration continued without let-up, however, accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s, it began to overwhelm our assimilative capacity, already greatly weakened by repeated blows to our national self-confidence struck by the counterculture of the late 1960s and afterward. Almost overnight, it seemed, America embraced a new definition of herself to suit the new demographic realities, that is, “diverse.” Not that we were more diverse in ethnicity and race than ever before, which was obvious, but that our very essence was diversity, or, as the public-service ads put it, our strength was in our diversity. Our strength was not in the common principles and allegiances that bound us together despite our diversity. No, our strength was in the diversity itself.

The same thought was recently amplified and intensified by Karl Rove: “Everything that this country is, everything that we have achieved, everything that we hold, everything that we promise, is because we are a nation of diversity, brought together by immigration, and sharing a common dream,” he told the Hispanic advocacy group La Raza. Aside from making diversity the defining feature of America and immigration her virtual *raison d’être*, Rove substituted the fuzziness of “a common dream,” which can mean anything, for

the common ideal that is supposed to hold us together, that “moral sentiment” that is the “father of all moral principle” in us: that all men are created equal.

As such notions took hold, it even seemed wrong for America to have a majority population that, as a matter of historical fact, happened to be white, since having a majority character was an affront to diversity. Population predictions assured us that we would not remain a white-majority country for long, and President Clinton professed himself eager to become part of a minority. He declared that America needed a third “great revolution,” after the American Revolution and the civil-rights revolution, to “prove that we literally can live without having a dominant European culture.”

We were no longer a nation of a specific people with a specific history, culture, and character, whose government protected specifically defined political and civil rights, now open to a more varied array of individuals. We became a universal nation, the repository of the abstract universal rights of all humanity. The object had quickly changed from simply removing the barriers to individuals who belonged to groups previously disfavored to bringing all groups here so that we could atone for past discrimination and demonstrate our universalism.

The issue became less that the immigrants had to prove themselves worthy of America than that America had to prove herself worthy of them, less that the immigrants were fortunate to be here, than that we were fortunate to have them. They would regenerate our decadent morality. They would do the work Americans were said to be too fat and lazy to do. They would not only care for our children, they would have the children that Americans were supposedly too selfish to have. Most of all, their diversity would prove how great we were, illustrating the universalism of our

ideas. The “electric cord” was now stretching across the globe. But far from becoming less conscious of race and ethnicity in this grand universalism, America became more so.

Education changed drastically to suit our new national goals. Traditional European and American culture was jettisoned, and “dead white males”—the

clichés from the previous waves of immigration, the circumstances of which were entirely different. Anything short of utter surrender to the strong arms of diversity, preferably followed by choking gasps of gratitude, became unacceptable. When beleaguered American citizens tried to assert the boundaries of citizenship and to withhold state

**AMERICA HAD BECOME SO OPEN THAT SHE NO LONGER HAD ANY SOLID IDENTITY, AND WHAT IT MEANT TO BE AN AMERICAN HAD SHRUNK SO THAT IT BARELY SUPPLIED ANY SUBSTANCE—HAVING A JOB, PAYING TAXES, AFFIRMING OPENNESS, ENDORSING PLURALISM, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY.**

great authors, thinkers, and doers of Western civilization—were ejected or greatly downgraded. The study, cultivation, and “celebration” of the differences among groups; the exposure of inequalities; the ascription of these inequalities to systemic injustice; and the effort to eliminate these inequalities through demands for “social justice” became the main substance of the education experience.

Many conservatives vigorously exposed the impoverishment of multiculturalism and cogently defended the value of Western civilization and tradition. But many also insisted that America is an idea, standing for universal principles so transcendent as to require no cultural underpinnings. The Right alternated between claiming assimilation was rapidly taking place—even as parts of the country became completely bilingual or Spanish-speaking—and asserting that it should be more forcefully advanced—losing sight of the fact that there were fewer and fewer mechanisms of assimilation and less and less culture into which to assimilate.

Concerns about the new immigration were denounced by both Left and Right as racism and smothered by irrelevant

benefits from illegal immigrants, many people, Right and Left, vociferously denounced this as un-American.

America had become so open that she no longer had any solid identity, and what it meant to be an American had shrunk so that it barely supplied any substance—having a job, paying taxes, affirming openness, endorsing pluralism, celebrating diversity. And the ideas. But what was happening to the ideas?

Was anyone looking to see if they were being passed on? Muslim schools in the United States were teaching that Islamic theocracy is the highest form of government. Studies found laughable ignorance on the part of American youngsters, such as thinking that Karl Marx’s proviso, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,” comes from the United States Constitution. But we shouldn’t blame these young people, when Vice President Al Gore translated our national motto, “*E pluribus unum*,” “Out of many, one,” as “Out of one, many.”

It seemed that the more we focused on the ideas and the less importance we attached to the cultural forms that give them shape, context, and meaning, the

vaguer they grew. National sovereignty, for example, was one of the quintessential elements of the founders' vision, vital in ensuring the natural rights of citizens—"to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed," the Declaration of Independence states. Yet this sovereignty was being winked away in favor of the rights of foreigners.

America's foundational commitment to equality, which had always meant equality of the individual before the law, has morphed into equality of groups. Affirmative action, a bitterly contested policy even in application to America's historic minorities, was now applied to the new minority groups as well. As Peter Wood explains in his book *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* activists used the simple fact of diversity to push an ideology of diversity, mandating proportional outcomes for every significant minority group in every area of culture. Differences in performance must be seen as the result of continuing racism—failure to fulfill the ideals and make good on the promises of diversity.

Even more astonishing, Wood explains, is that while diversity is "gigantic in its ambition" to transform America into a society of enforced group equality, it has no mandate in our founding principles. Diversity "is not announced ... in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution or the Bill of Rights," Wood asserts. "It is not discernible anywhere in the founding documents of the United States" and is "not even remotely implied." (The one mention of diversity that I could find in the *Federalist Papers* referred to the diversity of abilities among men.)

As Wood puts it, diversity can be understood as a "counterconstitutional principle," an "attempt to reverse the founders' efforts to check the growth and power of factions in American Society." And yet that counterconstitutional

principle made its way into the Constitution in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), when America was constitutionally committed to the proportional representation of groups—a policy that had, admittedly, been widely practiced for decades but without constitutional endorsement (and will likely continue to be practiced even if that endorsement is withdrawn). Going even further, a recent decision of the Ninth Circuit granted the University of Washington Law School the right to seek quotas—euphemistically called "critical mass"—not simply for Asian students but for the Asian subcategories of Cambodians and Chinese. (In this regard it seemed regrettably symbolic when the American-born, prize-winning playwright David Hwang confessed in a recent interview that he no longer feels Asian-American. No, not because he feels more simply American but because he feels more Chinese.)

The "ideas" were weakening, no longer lending steel to American identity. In her summary chapter as editor of a

No one who understood what Lincoln called "that moral sentiment ... that is the father of all moral principle" in us, could have thought of such a thing. Lincoln is clearly presenting this identification with the American idea, in which he evokes the language of the New Testament, as a substitute for the actual flesh and blood identification that is supposed to constitute membership in the countries of Europe. He references that type of identity in the previous lines, where he adduces the language of the Old Testament—"we were then a very small people in point of numbers," he says of America at its founding two or three generations previous to himself. To become an American is to become part of a sacred history that shadows the Biblical story. Anyone who needs in addition to this identification a movie-land narrative of "starting over" is obviously not ready to "sign on" to the proposition in the first place and therefore cannot be an American, as defined by the universalists themselves.

ANYONE WHO NEEDS IN ADDITION TO THIS IDENTIFICATION A MOVIELAND NARRATIVE OF "STARTING OVER" IS **OBVIOUSLY NOT READY TO "SIGN ON" TO THE PROPOSITION IN THE FIRST PLACE AND THEREFORE CANNOT BE AN AMERICAN, AS DEFINED BY THE UNIVERSALISTS THEMSELVES.**

collection of essays on immigration, *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, Tamar Jacoby suggests that while the traditional American narrative based on the founding is important, we should enlarge it to make newer immigrants feel more a part of our country by affirming "that what it means to be an American is essentially to arrive as a newcomer—to start over and make a new life. From the Pilgrims to the slaves to the Ellis Island generation. ... this is the one experience that all Americans share."

But of course we know that few really take the proposition seriously anymore. It has become an easy, unthinking way of defining American identity so as to exclude no one whom the definer wants to include, for whatever reasons.

Thus the illegal immigrants are only echoing back what we have taught them. They saw America dilute herself in the name of a universalism that supplies no substantive meaning and makes her the property of the world. They saw

America cringe in shame at her majority and look to redeem herself in diversity. They saw her dismiss the importance of national sovereignty and the rule of law to allow a massive illegal population to live within her borders. They saw her destroy her own principles to produce group equality. Through multiculturalism they learned that they could boldly proclaim anti-American sentiments while extolling the cultures they left behind. They heard American elites announce their countrymen's softness and inability to work with their hands. So the immigrants took our measure and drew their conclusions. "America is a continent, not a country," they proclaimed in their mass protests—this time in English.

Now we are told that those who oppose amnesty risk alienating the Hispanic vote. Note the ease of passage from the universal principles that informed the 1965 Immigration Act to ethnic factions that demand continued immigration as the price of their votes, even if a majority of Americans conscientiously believe such immigration

harms the interests of the country. But in truth, the passage from universalism to ethnic solidarity, or multiculturalism, is not really surprising. As human beings, we arise from and are nourished by particular cultural contexts. In an effort to make our country accessible to all the world, American identity has been universalized to such an extent that it no longer satisfies the thirst for specific cultural meaning in the human soul.

Even a publication from the American Association of Colleges and Universities, so utterly cemented in diversity propaganda, managed to arrive at this simple truth: "as human beings, each of us must have a place, traditions, webs of associations to which we centrally and vitally belong, where we are readily recognized, where we do not have to explain each aspect of ourselves, our histories, our idiosyncrasies, our standpoints." The authors lament the inadequacy of the universal concept of "the rights-bearing individual, autonomous, unfettered, self-determining" to supply the flesh and blood substance of human

life in society. Of course the authors' solution is diversity, in which individuals seek that more substantive identity in subgroups, mainly defined by race and ethnicity but also by religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

But our response should be to revive the sense of our own cultural particularity—the main cultural formation out of which we arose and that gave specific form to the concepts of freedom and individual rights that we profess. Universal values require particular application. It is not possible to understand America without some knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome, the Bible, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, Shakespeare, Milton, Melville, and Twain, or without an appreciative and specific comprehension of the monumental achievement of the founding. The input of other cultures should, of course, be acknowledged, but as part of the organic whole, not as adversarial enclaves. Likewise, minorities should understand themselves as part of the whole and abandon the stance of grievance and entitlement that indicates they do not honor the proposition but believe they are more equal than others. And until our cultural core is renewed, opposition to quasi-amnesty for over 10 million illegal aliens already here, and to the prospect of tens of millions of new immigrants in the coming decades, is entirely legitimate.

"We the people of the United States" begins the preamble to our Constitution. Only a consciously united people can profess the great ideas of our founding, not a collection of disparate groups, or, for that matter, a nation of immigrants. Signing on to the proposition means being part of the culture—and the people—that professes it. ■

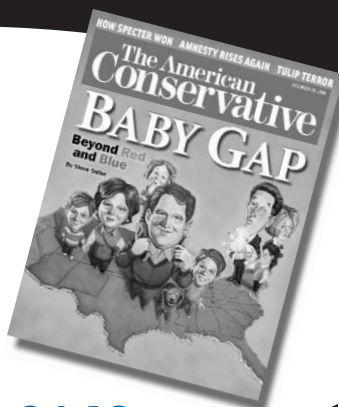
*Carol Iannone is the editor at large of Academic Questions.*

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*The Queen*]

### Sense and Sensibility

By Steve Sailer

ARRIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO one afternoon in 1983, I saw on the news that Queen Elizabeth II was to dine that evening with President Reagan in Golden Gate Park. So I climbed into a cab and, feeling like the nursery rhyme pussycat, declared, "I want to look at the Queen!"

"Any queen in particular, buddy?" responded the cabbie. "This town's full of them."

He dropped me on a street corner where hundreds had already assembled, including a dozen Irish demonstrators chanting IRA slogans. Eventually the longest motorcade I'd ever seen rolled by, and there in a limousine window was the face on all those postage stamps, bestowing upon us her regal wave, a quarter-turn of her upright cupped hand. We bystanders erupted in cheers, including the IRA supporters, who hopped up and down in joy. Then she was gone, and the Irish protestors slunk off, shamefaced at succumbing to the glamour of the crown.

Yet the Queen's dignity was soon trumped by the rapidly emerging visual grace of her daughter-in-law, the princess of Wales, a goddess who deigned to appear on the cover of *People* every month.

That Elizabeth's stiff-upper-lip response to Diana's 1997 death threat-

ened the very existence of the monarchy is the premise of playwright Peter Morgan's witty and empathetic screenplay for "The Queen," just released on DVD.

At first, Her Majesty doesn't take the histrionic excesses of grief on the telly seriously—most of the princess's early mourners appear to be either silly girls or male homosexuals. Her callow new prime minister, Tony Blair, a close student of opinion polls, however, shamelessly declares Diana, that epitome of high-society glamour, to be the "People's Princess." Elizabeth dismissively rejects Blair's counsel that the Windsors mourn in view of the media.

The queen ultimately realizes that the stoicism that got Britain through WWII is obsolete when she watches an interview with a burly truck driver camped out with his young daughter in front of Kensington Palace. He's her kind of subject, a plain man who could be counted on if the Germans ever had to be put in their place again. And yet he's gone mad, too.

Meanwhile, to the disgust of his anti-monarchist wife, the New Labour prime minister begins to realize that the queen's older and sterner code of conduct represents something finer than the hysteria of his "Cool Britannia." They compromise and together save the throne.

While the film's plot reflects the conventional wisdom that the frenzied national response to the princess's death represented a mortal danger to the monarchy, that never seemed terribly plausible. As the Sex Pistols pointed out in their 1977 hit single "God Save the Queen," from a purely pragmatic viewpoint, the queen is to be saved "Cos tourists are money."

Moreover, the orgy of princess-worship that followed Diana's death hardly

demonstrated that the British people thought royalty was outmoded. They clearly adored monarchy. They just wanted better-looking monarchs. Following the Royal Family remains as popular as ever because it offers soap opera in the guise of affairs of state.

That historical quibble aside, "The Queen" is a delight. The film seems to promise the thrill of gossip but instead delivers the rarer satisfaction of displaying contemporary public figures behaving well. At the recent Oscars, Morgan earned the unusual distinction of writing the screenplays for both the Best Actress, Helen Mirren, in "The Queen," and the Best Actor, Forrest Whitaker, in "The Last King of Scotland." With similar symmetry, Mirren won Golden Globes for playing Elizabeth II in the movies and Elizabeth I on television.

"The Queen" was a deserved hit because of Mirren's stupendous performance. As Cockney actor Michael Caine has often pointed out, the poor talk fast and loud because they don't expect anybody to pay attention for long. Mirren's queen, in contrast, dominates every scene through her stately assurance that the merest frowning of the royal brow will suffice to convey her boundless disappointment in the meretricious modern world.

The ineffable superiority of the queen's arch-English persona left me wanting to apologize to her for the unpleasantness of 1776. As Mirren conclusively demonstrates, the British class system produces better actors than America's cult of the casual and authentic. Every Brit is trained to play a role in society, and many take it on themselves to attempt to slither into higher stations, so stage and screen are only natural extensions of daily life. ■

Rated PG-13 for Mrs. Blair's brief strong language.

## BOOKS

[*The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World*, John O'Sullivan, Regnery, 360 pages]

## Greatest Hits of the Eighties

By Peter Hitchens

DISILLUSIONED ADULTS sometimes revisit the fairy tales of their childhood and wonder what happened, in the end, to Goldilocks, Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella. Did they all live happily ever after or was it the usual story—the enchanted forests plowed down for tract homes, the happy kingdoms absorbed and obliterated by powerful and oppressive neighbors, the Red Riding Hood family sued into the ground by the wolf's relatives, and the three bears carted off to the zoo for protective custody?

It is the same with our grown-up stories of heroism and triumphant goodness. It seems cruel to dispel them. But perhaps we must, if only to make sure that the good old causes are not all defeated in the end, thanks to unwise complacency or self-delusion. *The President, the Pope and the Prime Minister*, John O'Sullivan's engaging account of that great period of hope in the 1980s, must warm the heart of any decent person. We few, we happy few, who did not buy the fellow-traveling garbage of the majority, never expected to see such wondrous times. As I read through this committed, generous account, I recalled all those moments when my own spirits lifted higher than I had ever thought possible. I recollected an encounter with Lech Walesa on a freezing morning in Gdansk, when he was still one small man against an empire, fortified by an unconquerable faith. I remembered an even colder day in Prague when that impossibly lovely city suddenly recovered

its twice-betrayed liberty. And I called to mind the almost inexpressible delight of seeing thousands of Communist Party membership cards hurled into trashcans and onto bonfires in Moscow in August 1991. O'Sullivan is also good on the creepy machinations of Western fellow travelers who actively sold or gave themselves to the wrong side and should never be allowed to forget it. Yet they have forgotten it, and they got away with it, and they continue to be powerful in Western nations, which is what is wrong with this celebratory account of a victory that has drained away.

How long ago it all seems now—and what a lost opportunity. But I shall come to that. O'Sullivan's history does an important service in reminding us of three extraordinary, seemingly providential people whose simultaneous existence certainly altered the course of history. If others had held their posts, then many things we now see as normal would undoubtedly remain the eccentric fantasies they were 30 years ago. And if they were providential, what of the extraordinary way in which all three survived determined attempts to murder them? Was that providential, too? O'Sullivan hints that it may have been, which is a good story. And his account of Ronald Reagan's conduct after he was shot is extremely moving. But while I

Even so, we must be careful here. The Cold War in Europe appeared to be the clearest and most unambiguous conflict between good and evil most of us were likely to see. The pure rightness of the West's cause gave a sort of glory to a series of men and women, ranging from thumping crooks to workaday politicians, who scaled the greasy pole of politics and found themselves thrust into the leadership of a crusade. In the case of the late pope, the glory was not undeserved. Free of the political taint, raised under tyranny and educated in austere, incorruptible opposition to it, John Paul II was born and shaped for the role he played. He was undoubtedly a good and noble person, an example of true manhood and a fine intellect, and Poland was a dreadfully oppressed country sighing for emancipation.

But I think there is a sort of presumption in the idea that God is particularly interested in liberating people from Communism, let alone from the rule of Jimmy Carter or of the British Labor Party. His kingdom is not of this world, as Christ unambiguously said. Go to Poland now, and you will find that the church and the Christian faith are, if anything, weaker than they were under the heel of the Communists. I might add that Poland, though freed from the iron manacles of Moscow, is now instead

IF OTHERS HAD HELD THEIR POSTS, THEN **MANY THINGS WE NOW SEE AS NORMAL** WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN THE **ECCENTRIC FANTASIES THEY WERE 30 YEARS AGO.**

should like to believe that the hand of the Almighty stretched forth to save these people, I cannot. I am one of the last Protestants still standing in Britain, where all branches of Christianity now huddle together for warmth, whereas they used to warm themselves by incinerating each other. Yet even I often feel that Karol Wojtyla's tenure as bishop of Rome was close to miraculous. One certain result was that it became far harder for educated people to scorn religion once he had shown its power to move and the courage it could engender.

wrapped up in the sticky marshmallow bonds of the European Union, a despotic, secretive, and lawless empire with the strong potential to get much worse than it already is. As for the U.S. and Britain, I will get round to that. I really wouldn't like to speculate on what God might have wanted to happen, but if He was hoping for the current arrangements, I should be very much surprised.

So I cannot quite share John O'Sullivan's awe at these things, even though I once did, and even though I should like to. As I read, and enjoyed, his fond

recollections of Margaret Thatcher's resolve and Ronald Reagan's humorous squashing of liberal idiocy, I kept thinking, "Yes, so it was, but why in that case have we ended up as we are?"

My notes are full of indignant squawks, as he skates elegantly past the manifold faults, bungles, omissions, and errors of Prime Minister Thatcher and President Reagan. He is far too kind to Reagan, whose laughable idealist pacifism came close to bringing about Western nuclear disarmament at the Reykjavik summit. Likewise, he is much too generous to Thatcher, whose economic policies, which were intended to squeeze a swollen public sector, actually began by devastating much of Britain's manufacturing industry.

But above all he is silent on the complete failure by these two supposed conservatives to grasp that the Marxist enemy had shifted his ground. As the missiles and tanks withdrew or went to the scrap yard, the enemies of freedom and faith fanned out into the schools, the TV studios, the publishing houses, the judges' benches, the newspaper offices, and the academy. Liberated from the charge of disloyalty because their cause could no longer be identified with a hostile foreign power, they had never been so free to subvert our open societies. The unfettered market, the sale of public housing, the transformation of public monopolies into private ones were not answers to this powerful ideological opponent—all the more potent because so many of its ill-educated foot soldiers did not even know what cause they were serving. What did Prime Minister Thatcher and President Reagan do for the institution of marriage, rigor in education, adult authority, or the idea that people are responsible for their own actions? Far too little.

What did they do for the idea of national sovereignty without which no proper conservative positions can be defended? Well, Reagan was less to blame in this matter, but Thatcher repeatedly compromised with the European Union's aggrandizement, which is actually one of the major instances of real great-power aggression in our age. She

began the betrayal—now almost complete—of Britain's own people in Northern Ireland, and even became involved in the campaign for liberal intervention in Yugoslavia, a foreign-policy impulse that led directly to the Iraq fiasco.

By contrast, the pope and his less-beloved but more dogged successor did hold fast against the satanic optimism of the free market and opposed both vain-glorious Gulf Wars despite the unpopularity it caused them. I am by no means sure that, had they survived in office into the current era, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan would have been able to resist the rush to attack Saddam Hussein or the current attempt to inflate Iran into a global threat. Just as importantly, I think their moral and cultural failures at home would have become more evident. In that case, would the apparent alliance between pope, premier, and president have been sustainable? Could their stories have been contained in one book suggesting they were all traveling parallel paths? I rather doubt it.

Had they been as successful as is now claimed, it is odd that so much of the supposed Reagan-Thatcher legacy has proved so easy to dismantle. The incompetent, extravagant Bush administration has probably sunk political conservatism in the U.S. for ten years to come, and perhaps longer. The British Conservative Party nowadays hopes to save itself by adopting the spending habits and social programs of its Labor opponents and shrinks like a prodded mollusk when asked to pronounce on issues of absolute morality or national independence. In both countries, actual and moral illiteracy are epidemic, and the liberty of the individual is in serious danger. The power of the Western alliance, once apparently unchallenged, has plainly passed its peak. The world has certainly changed since 1980, and to begin with, it seemed to be changing for the better. But can we now be so sure of that? It is too soon for such confident eulogies as this. ■

*Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the London Mail on Sunday. He is the author of The Abolition of Britain.*

[*Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World*, Margaret MacMillan, Random House, 432 pages]

## Middle Ground in the Middle Kingdom

By **Nikolas Gvosdev**

MARGARET MACMILLAN'S *Nixon and Mao* tells the story of an American president visiting the capital of a country whose regime had gone unrecognized by Washington for more than two decades. There, he met with a leader who espoused an ideology antithetical to free-market democracy, who claimed the right to spread his revolution across the globe, and who actively supported an insurgency in a neighboring country directed against a U.S.-backed regime and U.S. military forces. The president did so against the wishes of an influential lobby that argued strongly against any sort of engagement and still clung to the belief that a group of offshore exiles might yet achieve regime change.

Well, sort of.

It is difficult to look back on the "week that changed the world"—Feb. 21-28, 1972 to be exact—without benefit of hindsight: the successful normalization of U.S.-China relations, the strategic alignment that contained the USSR and helped to contribute to its collapse, and China's present-day economic miracle. "Only Nixon could go to China" is such a cliché that even MacMillan ends her book with Mr. Spock quoting this famous "Vulcan proverb" in "Star Trek VI." It seems so easy—all it takes is for two implacable foes to "reach out" and everything falls into place.

Because the gamble worked, we might lose sight of the fact that success was not foreordained, and MacMillan works hard to show the reader every pitfall, every possible point before and during the visit when the entire project

could have gone off the rails. To take one example, MacMillan details how difficult it was for both sides to come to an agreement on the final text of the Shanghai Communiqué. In the final hours before its release, the U.S. and Chinese sides were still negotiating over its precise wording. At one point, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, having called a break in the talks with National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, was advising Premier Zhou Enlai to dispense with the document altogether and simply conclude that President Nixon had come to China “as a tourist”—which would have been a humiliating setback for the president.

#### A PROFOUND REALISM ON BOTH SIDES AIDED THE 1972 INTERACTION.

So how did they pull it off?

Timing helped. The threat of a Soviet invasion, which intensified after the 1969 border clashes, forced the Chinese leadership to decide whether it was in Beijing’s best interests to be simultaneously hostile to both superpowers. The United States, bogged down in Indochina and much less confident of its ability to contain Soviet expansionism, was much more willing to accept the Biblical injunction, “He who is not against us is for us,” and reach out to the Communists in Beijing. As MacMillan notes, much of the fire had gone out of the “China lobby,” which still believed in a Nationalist restoration from Taiwan, giving the Nixon administration a greater degree of flexibility.

Technology helped too—but only to a point. Live coverage could be beamed by satellite back to the United States, transmitting the images Nixon’s Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman wanted the country to see. But the Nixon team did not have to cope with more recent advances that would have made it nigh impossible to successfully stage-manage the visit. What would have happened if *National Review* editor William F. Buckley had been able to transmit in real time his opinion that Nixon’s toasting of the Chinese leadership in the Great Hall of the

People was as if the Nuremberg prosecutors had “descended to embrace Goering and Goebbels and Doenitz and Hess, begging them to join . . . in the making of a better world”? A good deal of the luster of the visit could easily have been tarnished. Keeping the preparations secret would have been much more difficult in today’s media environment.

In Zhou’s toast at the opening banquet, he spoke of the masses as the motive force of history, but the opening to China succeeded in large part because of specific individuals. Kissinger and Zhou, in all of their dealings—beginning with Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing—were able to forge a

working relationship that enabled them to navigate around the bumps in the road. Their accomplishment probably could not have been duplicated by two other people wearing the hats of the NSA and premier.

But it is important to qualify this point. Certainly Vice President Spiro Agnew and a pro-Soviet Chinese leader like Marshal Lin Bao would not have found common ground so easily. Mao’s reluctant admiration for “rightists”—much more pragmatic and less likely to engage in debates about morality—raises the question of whether JFK, had he survived, would have been able to go to China a decade earlier than Nixon. Even if the vote count had gone differently in Illinois in 1960 and Nixon had become president then, the Mao and Nixon of the early 1960s would not have been able to meet, given their worldviews at that time.

A profound realism on both sides as to what was achievable aided the 1972 interaction. No one had any illusions that there might be some sort of “convergence” between the Chinese and American systems. At no point did Nixon relinquish his antipathy and fundamental dislike of Communism. Mao, a Marxist version of the Chinese Emperor Qianlong, who declared to the

British envoys in 1792 his lack of interest in trading with the West, had no desire to discuss economic questions or engage in academic exchange with the Americans. Both sides wanted to stop being enemies; they did not expect to become friends. In one of history’s greater ironies, many of the Chinese elite of today have been educated in the United States, and the two countries’ economies are now so delicately intertwined.

A desire to improve relations did not change the fact that “there exist great differences between the Chinese Government and the United States Government,” as Zhou pointedly noted at the opening banquet for Nixon. Mao told Nixon that the Chinese press would continue to be quite critical of the United States, as he expected the American media would be of China. Difficulties, most notably Taiwan, were acknowledged and assessed. The hope that deferral would take such questions off the table because “time heals all wounds” has not proven to be the case for Taiwan.

What happened was that both countries reached a “Westphalian moment”: each side agreed to a modern version of the classic phrase, set down in the 1648 treaty, “*cuius regio, eius religio*”—“whose rule, whose religion.” As Nixon put it to Mao, “We can find common ground, despite our differences, to build a world structure in which both can be safe to develop in our own ways on our own roads.” Whereas the United States had previously refused to recognize the People’s Republic of China and Chinese propaganda routinely predicted the eventual “liberation” of America by the forces of revolution, both sides now took as the organizing principle of their relationship that no country should be in a position to impose its social system on another. To the extent that the United States has itself begun to repudiate the Westphalian principles of state sovereignty, Nixon’s visit to China begins to appear to us today as something from another age, just as a Dickens novel has a slightly archaic ring to its language.



As late as 1985, Irving Kristol could declare in the first issue of *The National Interest* that the task of American foreign policy was not to make the world "safe for democracy" but to create conditions "so that the nations of the world can have the opportunity to realize whatever potential for popular government and economic prosperity they may possess or come to possess." That is a far cry from today's attitude that the United States not only has the right but a national security obligation to spread democracy around the globe.

No 2008 presidential candidate would likely endorse the sections of the Shanghai Communiqué in which the United States declared, "No country should claim infallibility and each country should be prepared to re-examine its own attitudes for the common good"; and that nations should be able to make their own decisions regarding their social and political systems "free of outside pressure or intervention."

Our attitudes about diplomacy have also changed. Nixon could visit China despite the number of unresolved issues left on the table and without preconditions being met (such as termination of Chinese support for the North Vietnamese) because of his view that communication, even between countries with profoundly different ideologies and aspirations, was necessary to "lessen the risks of confrontation." Contrast that with an attitude today that the very act of talking with opponents is a sign of weakness. For America's chief diplomat, bargaining with North Korea and Iran over nuclear issues is unthinkable: "That's not diplomacy; that's extortion."

This makes it much more difficult for any future administration to repeat Nixon's accomplishment with other implacable foes of the United States. MacMillan's work is therefore likely to be relegated to the "history" pile rather than plumbed for advice by the current foreign-policy establishment. ■

*Nikolas Gvosdev is the editor of The National Interest.*

[*Strictly Right: William F. Buckley Jr. and the American Conservative Movement*, Linda Bridges and John R. Coyne Jr., John Wiley & Sons, 358 pages]

## Buckley's Paradise Lost

By Robert W. Merry

FOR CONSERVATIVES who recall William F. Buckley Jr. in his prime and the American conservative movement in its emergence, this book will likely generate nostalgia—and perhaps some political *ennui*. In rendering a tender but honest insiders' narrative of Buckley and *National Review*, the authors inevitably lead the reader to a depressing comparison between the fervent and coherent conservatism of yesteryear and the fractured and often misguided movement of today. Just as naturally, the reader might compare the vibrant, pertinent, brilliantly packaged *National Review* of Buckley's day with the scattered, unfocused, sometimes ill-mannered magazine we see now. One element of the story that doesn't change is Buckley himself.

But *Strictly Right* isn't, strictly speaking, a biography. It lacks the personal focus and depth of research to qualify for that designation. Rather, it presents a half-century of American political history from the perspective of *National Review* and its remarkable leader. On those terms, it succeeds admirably.

The authors are veterans of the magazine and the movement they write about. Both were recruited from academe to the magazine's rarefied precincts by Buckley himself. Bridges has devoted just about her entire adult life to the magazine, including ten years as managing editor. Coyne, *NR*'s leading political writer before bolting to Washington to write speeches for Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon, has nurtured a *National Review* byline for the better part of four decades.

Relying in part on their memories and the lore they know so well, they sprinkle

their narrative with amusing and telling anecdotes that give life and meaning to the central players. They enrich the oft-told story of Buckley and his magazine with fresh sketches and insights.

Of particular value is the authors' portrayal of Buckley's brilliance not just as polemicist and political showman but also as executive, strategist, and leader. It wasn't simply automatic that *National Review*, once founded, would have a profound impact on American politics. The 29-year-old Buckley took charge of an intellectually motley crew that, while in agreement about the Western crisis posed by Russian bolshevism and domestic collectivism, agreed on just about nothing else. The players included, as the authors note, "libertarians and Burkeans, free-marketeters and Southern Agrarians, Madisonians and European monarchists." It fell to the young man to forge a degree of coherence out of these powerful sentiments.

He did so with unsentimental adroitness. The idea for the magazine had originated with William S. Schlamm, a refugee from both Austria and Henry Luce's Time-Life empire, who also had identified the young Buckley as the right man to head the enterprise. But when Schlamm and another magazine stalwart, James Burnham, became embroiled in irreconcilable ideological disputes, Buckley sided with Burnham and allowed Schlamm to storm off. It was the right choice, notwithstanding that Schlamm's worldview matched Buckley's more closely than Burnham's did. Burnham soon emerged as a powerful force at the magazine, second only to Buckley in his contribution to the journal's ultimate success.

Buckley displayed similar shrewdness in crafting the magazine's positions on delicate issues of the day. He boldly excoriated John Birch Society head Robert Welch for splitting the conservative movement with the "extravagance" of his accusatory rhetoric. He did so, however, with characteristic political deftness, only after getting a nod of assent from Barry Goldwater himself. When his staff became hopelessly split over whether it should support or spurn the 1960 presi-

dential candidacy of Richard Nixon, Buckley wrote the editorial himself. Neither supporting nor rejecting the man, he issued a plea, "directed as much to Buckley's colleagues as to NR's readers," for each side to concede that the other's position fit reasonably within the conservative ambit.

And the authors remind us of Buckley's brilliance in capturing the *zeitgeist* at crucial moments. Particularly poignant was his speech to the national convention of Young Americans for Freedom on Sept. 11, 1964—just before the electorate would cast ballots on behalf of Barry Goldwater or Lyndon Johnson. Those in attendance had expected a fiery exhortation to march on to a brilliant November victory. Instead, he stilled the audience with the line, "I speak ... about the impending defeat of Barry Goldwater."

Following gasps, Buckley exhorted conservatives to embrace reality: "It is wrong to assume that we shall overcome; and therefore it is right to reason to the necessity of guarding against the utter disarray that sometimes follows a stunning defeat." Rather, he said, they must honor Goldwater's "political nobility" in placing himself and the conservative outlook before the American people. They could do that by "showing not a moment's dismay on Nov. 4" and resolving to "emerge smiling, confident in the knowledge that we weakened those [adversarial] walls, that they will never again stand so firmly against us." His words went beyond eloquence to capture just the right sentiment for that particular audience at that particular moment.

Bridges and Coyne shed fresh insight into the famous Buckley frenzy of professional and personal activity—the magazine, the column, the television show, the books, the lecture tours, the whirlwind social schedule, the sailing expeditions, the ski vacations. He managed all this, they suggest, through his brilliance as an executive. He surrounded himself with ultra-smart and omniscient people, then decisively rendered his judgments, delegated the follow-through, and moved on to the next item, never looking back.

This was one of the first things that

changed in 1990, when Buckley turned the *NR* editorship over to John O'Sullivan. While able to maintain the magazine's editorial heritage during his eight-year tenure, O'Sullivan lacked his predecessor's organizational brilliance. That soon turned out to be the least of the erosions to beset *National Review* and the movement it represented. To the many competing strains of political thought with which Buckley grappled as a young man at the helm of his fledgling journal, there now was added the neo-conservative impulse, which essentially captured the magazine just as it overtook the Bush administration.

This outlook, not so much a political philosophy as a political temperament, led Bush to Iraq and a quagmire that likely will seal the fate of Republicans, in much the same way that Vietnam sealed the fate of Democrats 40 years ago. And it has led *National Review* into a reactive defense of a war whose philosophical underpinnings include large elements of Wilsonian humanitarianism—an outlook that nearly all *NR* conservatives from the early years fundamentally despised.

That in turn led *NR*'s current editor, Rich Lowry, to publish what was perhaps the most reprehensible article ever to appear in the magazine—an April 2003 piece by former Bush speechwriter David Frum that questioned the patriotism of antiwar conservatives and linked opposition to the invasion of Iraq with anti-Semitism, white supremacism, and xenophobia.

The magnitude of this lapse later was captured with anguished eloquence in *The American Spectator* by Neal B. Freeman, a onetime Buckley protégé and former *NR* board member, who made clear just how far removed it was from the magazine's editorial heritage. The authors of *Strictly Right* seek a more evenhanded approach, quoting former *NR* publisher William Rusher as saying Frum's subjects weren't unpatriotic, just "simply, desperately, wrong."

But Buckley himself, after supporting the war in the early months, underwent a powerful conversion in mid-2004. "Ours is a failed mission," he declared,

and went on to question whether the mission's ultimate rationale for success—the U.S. capacity to forge democracy in the Middle East—had any realistic basis at all. He went so far as to question whether Bush's second inaugural address, articulating the heady goal of eradicating tyranny in the world, represents any kind of conservatism.

Bridges and Coyne report this conversion, but they don't explore its underlying significance—namely, that American conservatism has fallen upon hard times. In the early years, the magazine resided in the hands of a jumble of excitable intellectuals with a host of variegated opinions but two shared convictions: the imperative of thwarting communism abroad and reversing collectivism at home. From that little group, there emerged, with the aid of Buckley's long-headed sagacity, a coherent political philosophy that evolved and adjusted to external events to gain ever greater sway in political discourse and become America's leading political force.

Now that force seems spent. In its place is a discredited president who calls himself a conservative but presides over a massive federal build-up and employs Wilsonian rhetoric to justify a failed foreign war. William F. Buckley Jr. remains steadfast, but his magazine now seems unmoored from fundamental conservative tenets. Across the political landscape, there is hardly a potential statesman to be seen who represents the legacy of Ronald Reagan, let alone Barry Goldwater.

Rather like a smooth, flat stone tossed across the water, the authors skip a bit too much on the surface of events, generating both interest and amusement but leaving the reader inevitably wishing for more. But assessed on its own terms, the book gives good value as a chatty, charming bit of storytelling that, in providing an understanding of yesteryear, offers insight into the realities of today. ■

*Robert W. Merry, editor in chief of Congressional Quarterly, is the author of books on postwar journalists Joseph and Stewart Alsop and American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.*

# The Unfortunate Mrs. Middleton



How about a change of pace? Iraq, the neocons, Iran, Hillary—it's all bad news for the foreseeable future. As far as I can tell, the only two things

that haven't changed are Wall Street greed and English snobbery. I am not an expert of the former, but when you think that 25 years ago the Dow stood around 1050 and now is over 13,000, it does tend to show that human nature does not change. People look out for number one.

English snobbery, of course, has been around far longer than Wall Street. Perhaps some of you have read about the breakup of Prince William and the lovely Kate Middleton. The two youngsters had been stepping out—and living in—for some four years. They met at university, took holidays together, and Kate sat next to the queen on a few official occasions. The British press, which in reality should be called the Murdoch media, declared the couple unofficially engaged and the great Kate photography hunt began.

She was snapped leaving the house in the morning and returning to it after work. She was photographed shopping, going to and leaving restaurants and nightclubs, and was followed by a yelping mob of paparazzi when she went to her parents' modest home in the country.

Entrepreneurs manufactured William and Kate engagement crockery, hoping to be first in line when the official announcement came through. They are now selling them at cut-rate prices or giving them away at charity events.

I write all this because living part time in London, I knew as well as anyone that the wedding was something dreamed up by the media and nothing more.

Now comes the good part. Murdoch's minions are no fools. They always have a back-up story once the one they invented goes the way of the Hindenburg. The hacks had their line ready. If the romance crashed, it was to be blamed on the establishment's snobbery. Love takes second place to breeding, class war being the best news seller of all time.

As far as I know, no courtier or friend of William's ever said "Doors to manual" in reference to Kate's mother's career as an airline hostess. But those three little words were quoted as if engraved in stone by every tabloid and repeated *ad nauseam* on every chat show by the smiling wallet-lifters who make up the British tabloid and trash-TV world. In

napkin a serviette. The biggest *faux pas*, according to snobs who take such things seriously, is calling a sofa a couch or a settee.

See what I mean by snobbery? In all the years I have lived in Britain, I have yet to see an eyebrow raised over someone's use of a non-U word. (Nancy Mitford famously wrote a book back in the fifties outlining U—or upper class—and non-U terms.)

People to the manor born simply do not disapprove of those born in lesser circumstances than themselves. To the contrary, a duke is much more at ease with his dustman than with a hedge fund vulgarian who tries to ape the duke's manner of speaking. It was the media, not the royals, who had a field day when Kate's mother used the word "toilet." (For any snobs out there, toilet is a no-no, lavatory is middle class, and loo is upper.)

UNLIKE IN AMERICA, WHERE **ONE'S POCKETBOOK** IS TAKEN AS ONE'S WORTH, AN **ENGLISHMAN'S ACCENT COUNTS FOR MORE.**

other words, Kate was dropped because the royal family and the courtiers who run royal lives objected to the fact that Kate's mother was not to the manor born. How could they tell? Easy.

Unlike in America, where one's pocketbook is taken as one's worth, an Englishman's accent counts for more. Or used to, anyway. Even if one learns to fake it, like the great Lady Thatcher, who took elocution lessons and spoke la-di-dah English, there are still all sorts of giveaways. For example, a drawing room is never called a lounge, except on a boat. A mirror is a looking glass, except in a car. Wireless is upper class for radio, and one simply never calls a

The William and Kate love affair ran its normal course. They are both 25 years of age, and neither was ready to take the plunge—William, mind you, much less than Kate. In my opinion she has dodged a bullet. But the Murdoch in us all has turned her poor mother into something vulgar and grasping, a harri-dan who stood next to the queen and saw herself as a quasi-royal.

What rubbish! Most journalists will certainly rot in hell, but British hacks have the ninth circle reserved all to themselves. The next time you hear "doors to manual," please spare a thought of Mrs. Middleton and don't buy a British tabloid. ■

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